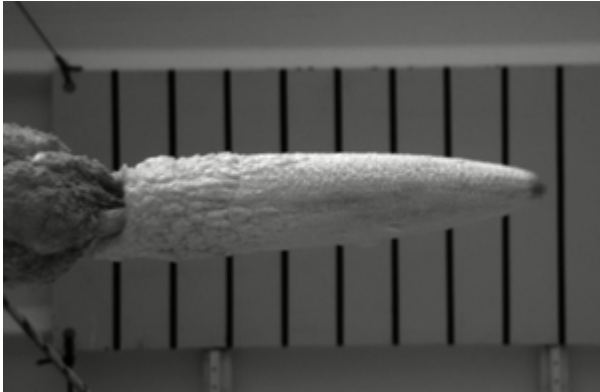


£440,000 research funding for next-generation sea mine disposal

News story

Sea mine disposal could be transformed using an innovative technique that is being researched by Dstl (Defence Science and Technology Laboratory).



The Pulse Dart in motion

The concept has received funding worth £440,000 from the Defence Innovation Unit to develop a working prototype and aims to provide a valuable capability for the Royal Navy, enabling minefields to be cleared more efficiently and quickly. Clearing minefields quicker will enhance freedom of operation without increasing risks to the disposal team.

Delivered underwater by a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), Dstl's Pulse Dart comprises a metal spike and tube. The spike penetrates the hard outer shell of the ordnance, where an electrical charge is applied to initiate the ordnance with the operative a safe distance away.

Mine disposal is an extremely hazardous operation and often undertaken in extremely poor visibility underwater. The Pulse Dart will remove the need for operator filled stores produced on site, reducing handling and proximity to explosives.

The Pulse Dart can reduce overall costs compared to current explosive disposal technology. As the Pulse Dart contains no explosive, moving and storing can be undertaken with minimal risk.

The Pulse Dart concept was created by Dstl scientist Peter Rushforth who won Dstl Innovator of the Year. He said:

Pulse Dart represents years of collaboration with colleagues across Dstl, the Royal Navy and industry. The additional funding will enable a working prototype to be developed by April 2023. Subject

to successful trials, a design could go to industry to tender around the same time.

Dstl's scientists and engineers have produced many notable technologies, for the benefit of UK defence and economic prosperity, and [Pulse Dart's design will be protected](#) by Dstl's Intellectual Property team.

[Creating the Pulse Dart](#)

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[Boost to drive investment in Essex, Norfolk and Lincolnshire environment](#)

A range of pioneering nature projects are to benefit from a new fund driving private investment in the environment and tackling climate change.

Announced by Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England, these include restoring kelp forests and creating new woodland to improve water quality. These plans are among 27 schemes chosen across England.

Organisations have been awarded upto £100,000 each, as part of the ground-breaking £10 million Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund.

The funding will be used to develop the projects to the point they can provide a return on investment. They will do this by capturing the value of carbon, water quality, biodiversity and other benefits provided by natural assets. These include woodlands, peatlands, catchments and landscapes.

Funding has been awarded to environmental groups, businesses and local authorities to develop projects that protect and enhance nature. The projects must also demonstrate innovative approaches to generating revenues from the wide range of benefits that nature provides. The 4 local projects that will benefit from the investment readiness fund are:

- UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (Essex) will receive £99,931 to develop a saltmarsh code to support habitat restoration activities in 4 sites in England. This will include the RSPB's Old Hall Marshes at Maldon. The project seeks to develop a rigorous and scientifically based voluntary certification standard for those that want to market the climate benefits of saltmarsh restoration.
- Norfolk Rivers Trust will receive £70,000 to finance wetlands using

environmental impact bonds. It aims to reduce phosphates and other pollutants entering the River Stiffkey, reducing the harm to biodiversity.

- Norfolk Wildlife Trust will receive £99,718 for the Wendling Beck Exemplar Project that will transform farmland through river restoration, grassland and wetland creation.
- Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust will receive £100,000 for the Green Investment in Greater Lincolnshire project. This will establish market procedures to trade biodiversity, carbon and water credits. These will be generated through improvements to agricultural land at a landscape scale, by working with landowners to identify nature-based solutions.

Revenues will be generated through the sale of carbon and biodiversity units, natural flood management benefits and through reduced water treatment costs. In developing these revenue streams, the fund will help create a pipeline of projects for the private sector to invest in. It will also develop new funding models that can be scaled and replicated elsewhere.

Projects receiving funding focus on tackling climate change and restoring nature through schemes such as woodland and habitat creation, peatland restoration, sustainable drainage and river catchment management.

Examples include developing a carbon credit model for saltmarshes across England and kelp forest restoration off the Sussex coast. Other projects include woodland creation in North Yorkshire and peatland restoration in Greater Manchester.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

To tackle the environmental challenges we face from climate change and biodiversity loss, it is crucial that domestic natural environment projects are able to attract private investment alongside support from the public sector.

Unleashing innovation and growing new sources of finance, such as through the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund, are fundamental for delivering nature recovery. Also developing nature-based solutions to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Chair of the Environment Agency Emma Howard Boyd said:

With the right structure, nature-based projects can be scaled up by private finance, helping to reduce emissions, prepare for climate shocks and create jobs.

From a new business model for multi-functional forestry in

Yorkshire, to an investment fund to transform farmland in Norfolk. These projects will provide evidence of funding models to make industries fit for the future, reach net zero by 2050, and create a nature positive future.

With COP26 coming to the UK this year, this demonstrates how to create investable propositions for nature based solutions to the climate emergency.

Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, said:

Restoring Nature is essential for tackling climate change and supporting a strong, sustainable economy. Mobilising private finance can make a huge contribution to this and NEIRF is among the steps needed right now to help unlock that investment.

I am very pleased that Natural England is providing technical input into the fund. We are helping to identify projects that will enable the public, private and charitable sectors to collaborate in genuine partnership to deliver nature recovery and action on climate change.

Working on behalf of Defra and the Treasury, the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Access Foundation for Social Investment will support the projects. The knowledge generated will be available to the public to encourage similar approaches to access private sector finance for nature projects in the future.

The Green Finance Institute (GFI) has supported DEFRA and the Environment Agency throughout the Fund's launch. This has included leading a series of educational workshops for interested applicants, and acting as third party assessor and advisor over the application and awards process.

Chief Executive of the GFI Dr Rhian-Mari Thomas said:

The recent Dasgupta Review made clear the value of nature to our economy and society and the need for investment in nature-positive projects. The Fund will accelerate private investment in nature, as will the learnings derived from the successful applicants and their projects. We look forward to continuing our support for this transformative initiative.

Subject to confirmation, the Environment Agency and Defra are planning to launch a further application round later this year.

Since the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan publication we have enshrined the UK's sixth carbon budget in law. Proposing a target which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

We are also encouraging countries to join the UK's call to protect at least 30% of the global ocean within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by 2030, as announced by the UK at the UN General Assembly in September 2018. We were also the first major economy to set a legally binding net zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2050.

[How I used the the Market Rent Only \(MRO\) procedure to negotiate a better tied deal](#)

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[Don't let your tyres ruin your summer holidays](#)

Only one in six drivers remembered to check their tyre pressure before setting off on a long journey, according to research commissioned by Highways England. Yet one in five motorway breakdowns are caused by worn or incorrectly inflated tyres and nearly a third of drivers confessed that they're not confident checking tyre pressure.

Roads are set to be busy this summer as people head off on day trips and holidays in the UK and abroad (depending on travel restrictions). In addition, reduced vehicle use following months of lock down and/or working from home in many cases, means essential pre-travel checks have never been more important.

Siobhan Wares, Traffic Officer for Highways England, who patrols the M25 and other major routes, said:

You are more likely to experience a breakdown or a collision if your tyres are incorrectly inflated or in a poor condition. It only

takes a few minutes to check your tyre pressure before you go on your day trip or staycation this summer, and it could save you time and money in the long run. Help yourself and your family reach your destination safely by checking your vehicle before you go.

The advice from Highways England is simple; check your tyre pressure and the condition of your tyres, including the spare, before you set off on a long journey. Look out for cuts or wear and make sure the tyres have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm, which is the legal limit. To check your tyre pressure, visit most fuel and service station forecourts, which have an air machine for checking and inflating your tyre pressure.

If you are stopped by the police and found with illegal tyres, you could receive a £2,500 fine and 3 penalty points per tyre.

Driving with underinflated or overinflated tyres can make your braking distance longer and make it harder to steer. Correctly inflated tyres are also safer and better for the environment too – using less fuel, reducing your carbon footprint, creating less environmental pollution and reducing waste, as the tyres don't wear out as quickly.

National Tyre Distribution Association (NTDA) Chief Executive Stefan Hay said:

The NTDA welcomes this excellent Summer Checks campaign and applauds the innovative and intelligent way that Highways England drives home such an important message to motorists.

Tyres are the only thing keeping a vehicle in contact with the road and many vehicles have been standing idle for long periods of time during the Covid-19 lockdowns and further restrictions. Now more than ever it is essential that motorists check their tyres on a regular basis and if in doubt about their roadworthiness, have them inspected by a professional tyre technician.

RAC Breakdown spokesperson Simon Williams said:

As we head into what looks like being one of the busiest summers ever on the roads, it's vital drivers check their vehicles before setting out as this could prevent a very unwelcome breakdown.

Tyres should have good amount of tread and be inflated to the correct pressures, and oil and coolant levels should be topped up if they are low. Our message to staycation drivers is: a few simple checks before travelling can greatly reduce your chances of being stuck at the side of a busy road when you least want to be.

Clare Egan, Head of Motor at Admiral, said:

It's easy to forget to check your car is ready for a long drive, especially if you haven't been using it much recently. It's important to take some time before you head off to check your fuel, oil, coolant, and screen wash levels, and most important of all, your tyres.

A tyre blowout could be at best inconvenient and at worst very dangerous. If a tyre blows while you are driving, it makes your car very hard to control and you could end up in an accident.

If you experience problems with your vehicle and you can't leave the motorway you should always try to go left – to an emergency area, a hard shoulder, motorway services or slip road hard shoulder.

But if that is not possible and you have stopped in a live lane or feel your life is in danger you must stay in your vehicle with your seatbelt and hazard lights on and call 999 immediately.

Before you set off, check your tyre pressure.

For more information related to checking your tyres, [please visit our tyre checks webpage](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Non-executive chair appointment

Press release

GAD has appointed a new non-executive director and Management Board Chair. Les Philpott has held a range of non-executive roles in the public, private and charity sectors.



The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) announces the appointment of Les Philpott as non-executive director and Management Board chair.

Experienced Chair

Les is an experienced non-executive director and Chair, having held a range of non-executive roles in the public, private and charity sectors, including at Chair level.

He has a background in public management at senior executive levels. He formerly held the role as chief executive at the Office for Nuclear Regulation and previously held senior positions in the Health and Safety Executive.

Improving capability

Commenting on the appointment Martin Clarke, Government Actuary, said: "GAD has a highly capable group of talented professionals who are dedicated to public service.

"I am delighted to welcome Les to our Management Board and I look forward to working with him as we continue to improve the department's capability and value for money."

Three-year term

Les will join GAD's Management Board immediately and will succeed Geoffrey Podger as Chair in November for a 3-year term, ending in September 2024.

Les was appointed by the Financial Secretary following a fair and open competition, after the role was advertised on the Cabinet Office Public Appointments website for 5 weeks.

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