

Over 3 million medicines and devices seized in UK as part of global crackdown

Over 3 million medicines and medical devices valued at over £9 million have been seized by UK officers as part of a global operation tackling the illegal online sale of medicines and medical devices. In the UK, 113,000 illegally operating websites were also removed, or had their URLs blocked. 8 search warrants were executed, with 7 criminals arrested.

In a week of action coordinated by Interpol, this year's 'Operation Pangea' ran from 18 to 25 May and saw over 100 countries joining forces to seize non-compliant medical products and also to identify and remove thousands of illegally operating websites and URLs offering medicines and devices. The operation also involved coordinating the arrests of several suspected organised criminals.

Among the medicines seized were anti-depressants, erectile dysfunction tablets, painkillers, anabolic steroids and slimming pills

Andy Morling, Head of Enforcement at the MHRA, said:

Criminals selling medicines and devices illegally are not only breaking the law but have no regard for your health. Taking fake or unlicensed medicines or using a non-compliant medical device could put your health and safety in danger and may lead to serious health issues.

Operation Pangea is a powerful example of what can be achieved through partnership working to tackle this kind of offending. We will continue to work closely with our international partners and UK Border Force to prevent unlicensed medicines from entering the UK, to identify illegally operating websites and to bring those criminals behind them to justice.

The MHRA will be following the week of action with a detailed analysis of the global results to create a better understanding of current and emerging threats. This work includes the identification of 'hotspot' exporting countries, favoured high-risk medicines being traded on the black market, and the ever-evolving business models of criminals worldwide seeking to take advantage of the public.

The MHRA's [#FakeMeds campaign](#) aims to encourage people in the UK who choose to buy medication online to take steps to make sure they are purchasing from safe and legitimate sources. The campaign also highlights the dangers of fake

medicines sold online and the negative health effects that taking them can have. It also encourages people to report suspicious offers and any side effects experienced to the [Yellow Card scheme](#).

MHRA safety advice when buying medicines:

Be careful when buying medicines online.

Medicines and medical devices are not ordinary consumer goods and their sale and supply is tightly controlled. Websites operating outside the legal supply chain may seem tempting, for example, a prescription medicine offered without a prescription. Not only are these sites breaking the law – they are putting your health at risk.

Do not self-prescribe.

Self-diagnosis and self-medication can be very dangerous. If you have a concern about your health, visit your GP, get a correct diagnosis and if medicines are prescribed, buy them from a legitimate source.

[Visit the #FakeMeds website](#) for tools and resources to help people purchase medication or medical devices safely online.

Ends

Notes to Editors

- The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is responsible for regulating all medicines and medical devices in the UK by ensuring they work and are acceptably safe. All our work is underpinned by robust and fact-based judgements to ensure that the benefits justify any risks.
- MHRA is a centre of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency which also includes the [National Institute for Biological Standards and Control \(NIBSC\)](#) and the [Clinical Practice Research Datalink \(CPRD\)](#). MHRA is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care.
- Operation Pangea is an international initiative to target the illegal internet trade in medicines. It was instigated by the MHRA in April 2006 and started as the UK Internet Day of Action (IDA). The annual operation is the largest internet based enforcement action of its kind to date and is coordinated by INTERPOL, together with the World Customs Organisation (WCO), the Permanent Forum of International Pharmaceutical Crime (PFIPC), the Heads of Medicines Agencies Working Group of Enforcement Officers (WGEO), Europol and the Pharmaceutical Security Institute (PSI), and supported by the Center for Safe Internet Pharmacies (CSIP) and private sector companies including LegitScript, Google, Mastercard, Visa, American Express and PayPal.
- The #FakeMeds campaign is a public health campaign which aims to reduce the harm caused by purchasing fake, unlicensed or counterfeit medical products online. The #FakeMeds campaign site gives practical steps the public can take when purchasing medical products safely online. This includes purchasing from recognised sources and the product marks to

look out for. Previous phases of the campaign have focused on fake erectile dysfunction (ED) medicines, dodgy diet pills and fake self-testing STI kits. [Further advice and top tips to safe purchasing medicines and medical products online](#). Follow #FakeMeds on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

- The MHRA [Yellow Card scheme](#) helps the MHRA monitor the safety of all healthcare products in the UK to ensure they are acceptably safe for patients and those that use them.

[UK confirmed as a Participant to the OECD Arrangement](#)

News story

The UK is now a Participant to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Arrangement.



Following formal approval by the existing Participants, the UK is now a Participant to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits (the Arrangement) and the related Aircraft Sector Understanding (ASU).

Up until EU exit, the UK (along with other EU member states) was represented by the European Commission under the 'common commercial policy'.

The UK now has its independent seat and UKEF officials will represent the UK. UKEF will also continue to play its part in meetings of Arrangement subgroups such as the Country Risk Experts.

What is the Arrangement and who are its Participants?

The Arrangement (the 'red book') is the main set of rules that govern the provision of officially supported export credits.

The Arrangement Participants are:

- Australia
- Canada
- EU
- Japan
- Korea
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Switzerland
- Turkey
- UK
- US

The ASU Participants are:

- Australia
- Brazil
- Canada
- EU
- Japan
- Korea
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Switzerland
- UK
- US

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[New composting drive turns remediation into fertilisation](#)

Reed beds are used as the final stage of the mine water treatment process where they filter out the remaining finer iron particles (ochre). Over time, the resulting build up of ochre affects their ability to filter particles and they need to be maintained. This involves removing the reed and ochre and replanting the reed bed with either new or transplanted reeds.

This is an expensive operation and historically, the materials were sent to landfill. The materials derived from the Bates mine water treatment scheme near Blyth, in Northumberland, have now for the first time, been sent to a nearby farm. Comprising mainly reed cuttings and ochre residues, on one project, 1,594 tonnes of the material was spread across 50 hectares of farmland to provide cover and enrich the soil. The process, known as land

spreading, beneficially adds organic matter to soil and reduces our reliance on manufactured fertilisers and other conditioners and additives.

Stephen Smithson, the Coal Authority's Contract Service Manager said:

We adopted high efficiency planning and scheduling practices and worked with external partners including the Environment Agency and farmers to see if our by-product streams could become inputs for other processes in order to achieve better sustainability outcomes.

Land spreading these materials offers significant environmental benefits, as well as operational cost savings of up to £1m. Since the raw material was hauled away in bulk, this minimised the need for transportation and helped to reduce our carbon footprint. The product itself serves as an environmentally friendly solution in farming and the move strengthens our commitment to sustainability. Eventually we want to achieve full circularity and this is the first step in that direction.

Prior to launching the refurbishment programme, several models were drawn up to identify maintenance requirements on individual sites. In addition, a costing model was prepared which estimated the required maintenance for each site. These models worked together to deliver the optimum Whole Life Costing (WLC) for the duration of the project. This in turn, enabled the programmes to deliver a flexible business-as-usual approach to suit annual budgets.

At the Bates mine water treatment scheme, the Coal Authority refurbished an 8,000 square metre area of reed beds between 2019 and 2020. To date, a total of 6,700 tonnes of ochre and reed cuttings have been removed and replaced with more than 17,800 new individual reed plants at the end of March 2021.

The Coal Authority uses passive settlement lagoons and reed beds when these are the most ecologically friendly way of treating mine water. In addition to their role in mine water treatment, these constructed wetlands serve as precious habitats for a variety of birds and insects. The preservation of these habitats is a key consideration when we need to remove reed bed cuttings. This is to ensure that the wildlife we have created spaces for is not disrupted by our refurbishments.

[Bird surveys conducted by students from Hull University](#) have shown that habitats within our constructed wetlands are used by 12 species of birds listed on the British Trust for Ornithology's list of Birds of Conservation Concern. This led to an opportunity for the Coal Authority's Environment Team to work with the RSPB to understand their reed bed management techniques. The team is drawing on the expertise of ecologists to explore new options, approaches and techniques for habitat management that can offer greater

efficiency without compromising the long-term viability of these important sites.

Autonomous nanodrone captures aerial intelligence in a snap

In any military or security operation, awareness of your surroundings is critical. With multiple routes and obstacles to consider, plus a range of weather conditions and communication limitations, gaining situational awareness whilst staying safe and hidden from your adversary can be a battle in itself.

UK aerospace company [Flare Bright](#) is pushing the boundaries of embedded AI technology to develop autonomous drones which will help frontline troops gain much needed situational awareness in even the most difficult conditions. With the help of DASA funding, they have developed SnapShot – a ruggedized nanodrone, designed to be the simplest way to obtain aerial images at the touch of a button and send them straight to a smart phone or tablet.

SnapShot is a fully autonomous system which can easily be deployed without additional equipment and will glide back to its user whatever the weather, winds or conditions – even in GPS denied and electromagnetically jammed environments.

DASA funding has helped Flare Bright develop their technology from prototype to a market-ready demonstration product and the company is now keen to showcase SnapShot's unique benefits to future users in the defence and security community. They also plan to work with stakeholders to further develop SnapShot's capabilities. The product has already generated interest from the British Army and Royal Air Force who will be demonstrating the technology during training exercises in Summer 2021. SnapShot has also been selected for the annual US Army Expeditionary Warrior Experiment in Fort Benning, Georgia, giving US soldiers a month-long period to test and evaluate the nanodrone's capabilities.

Chris Daniels, Chief Commercial Officer at Flare Bright said:

DASA funding has supported our credibility in the defence and security market and demonstrates confidence in our technology. It really has been a key foundation of our company's success.

Over the last five years, Flare Bright has gone from strength to strength. Winning new investments and contracts has enabled them to quadruple their

headcount and move to larger premises. In 2021 they were awarded an Octopus Award for Entrepreneurship, to celebrate their growth during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have also secured additional funding through Innovate UK's Future Flight Challenge, a programme which aims to develop greener ways to fly by advancing electric and autonomous flight technologies.

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