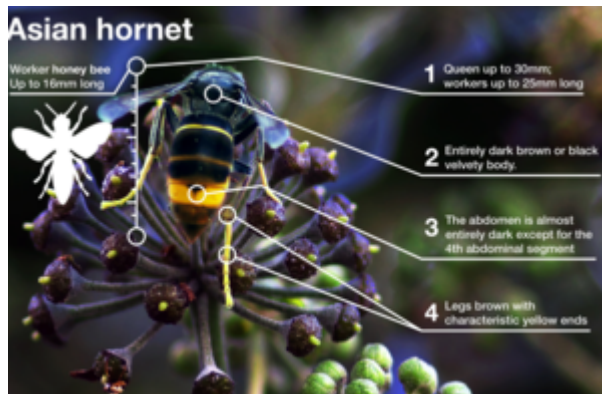


Asian hornets identified in Essex

Press release

Public asked to be vigilant after sightings of Asian hornets, an invasive species which are harmful to native wasps and hornets, are confirmed in Essex



Credit: Defra

Beekeepers and members of the public are today (Wednesday 28 September) being asked to remain vigilant after Asian hornets were spotted in the Rayleigh area of Essex.

The National Bee Unit has confirmed the sighting and monitoring is underway to detect further Asian hornets in the vicinity.

The Asian hornet is smaller than our native hornet and poses no greater risk to human health than our native wasps and hornets. However, they do pose a risk to honey bees and work is already underway to monitor for any hornet activity and to identify any nests nearby.

This is the first confirmed UK sighting since April 2022, when a single Asian hornet was captured in Felixstowe, Suffolk.

Defra's Chief Plant and Bee Health Officer Nicola Spence said:

By ensuring we are alerted to possible sightings as early as possible, we can take swift and effective action to stamp out the threat posed by Asian hornets. That's why we are working at speed to locate and investigate any nests in the area following this confirmed sighting.

While the Asian hornet poses no greater risk to human health than other wasps or hornets, we recognise the damage they can cause to honey bee colonies and other beneficial insects.

Please continue to look out for any Asian hornets and if you think

you've spotted one, report your sighting through the Asian hornet app or online.

It is important to take care not to approach or disturb a nest. Asian hornets are not generally aggressive towards people but an exception to this is when they perceive a threat to their nest.

If you suspect you have seen an Asian hornet you should report this using the iPhone and Android app 'Asian Hornet Watch' or by using our [online report form](#). Alternatively, e-mail alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

Please include a photograph if you can safely obtain one.

[Identification guides and more information are available](#) and if you keep bees you should keep up to date with the latest situation on the [gov.uk sightings page](#) and on [BeeBase](#).

- The cost of eradication on private land will be met by APHA.
- The Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat is a joint venture between Defra, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government to tackle the threat of invasive species. More information can be found on their [website](#).
- For details on the appearance of an Asian hornet, please refer to the [BeeBase](#) guide or the [non-native species identification guide](#).
- Photographs of the Asian hornet are available on our [Flickr account](#).
- The Asian hornet (*Vespa velutina*) is not to be confused with the Asian giant hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*) which has been found in North America.

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[£1.3million funding shared with three winning companies as part of telexistence competition](#)

TNO, Sheffield University and Cyberselves Universal Ltd, will develop four projects over the next 10 months that will then be tested and demonstrated next year.

The telexistence technology being developed has the potential to give those working in hazardous environments the capability to undertake tasks without physically being present, which can decrease risk and reduce the logistical burden associated with dangerous operations.

The companies were tasked with evaluating their innovations against 'use

cases' in:

- Specialist Nuclear Decommissioning Tasks
- Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD)
- Defence and Security Medical applications

NDA group companies were involved in developing the Special Nuclear Decommissioning Tasks 'use case' drawing on the experience and previous work in glove box decommissioning, remote handling and waste repackaging.

Andrew Gray, the NDA's Innovation Delivery Manager, said:

"We're excited to be working with DASA and Dstl on this competition. Advancing technologies in the area of telexistence will help us deliver our decommissioning mission more safely, securely and efficiently in enabling us to move humans away from harm.

"It's our aim to reduce decommissioning activities carried out by humans in hazardous environments by 50% by 2030. We're really encouraged to see such fantastic solutions being put forward by the supply chain."

Mark Hodder, Project Manager at Dstl, added:

"The DASA Telexistence: Phase 2 competition has been a great success in finding the latest innovators to collaborate with Dstl and NDA to develop a complete system using science and technology to integrate and create a platform using telepresence, robotics and haptics together to achieve results."

The NDA's partnership with Dstl and DASA, is an example of cross-government diversification and collaboration which has allowed access to a wider talent pool and the opportunity to work with smaller organisations that are not already part of the nuclear supply chain.

[Phase 2](#) of the competition follows on from Phase 1, where £570K worth of contracts were awarded to nine organisations delivering 11 projects.

[Pre-recording of cross examination evidence in Leeds Youth Court](#)

News story

Eligible witnesses at Leeds Youth Court can pre-record their cross-examination evidence as part of a wider test.



Eligible witnesses at Leeds Youth Court are now able to pre-record their cross-examination evidence for the first time, as part of a wider test on using this special measure within the youth court.

This means advocates can now apply for witnesses and victims at Leeds Youth Court to pre-record evidence.

Pre-recording of evidence

[Pre-recording of evidence for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses is already available in every Crown Court.](#) We're running a test at Leeds Youth Court to review how the process works in the youth court jurisdiction.

The measure allows victims and witnesses of crimes to video-record their cross-examination to play later during trial. The recording takes place as close to the time of the offence as possible while memories remain fresh. We hope this will help victims avoid the stress of giving evidence in a courtroom setting, which many find traumatic.

Whether to pre-record evidence is decided on a case-by-case basis, subject to judicial discretion.

Next steps

Criminal justice partners have developed a protocol for managing cases using this special measure. The protocol will be regularly reviewed by the partners, as it's applied to live cases.

Our Local Implementation Team – which includes criminal justice partners – will closely monitor the test. We'll work together to understand what we need to do to successfully support vulnerable witnesses to use this measure.

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High-potential tech scale-up finalists announced in Tech Awards

- Six winners will go head-to-head at the upcoming Web Summit in November 2022
- New Diversity in Tech award to be announced
- Winners to access specially-tailored UK growth package, including mentoring and support

The government's tech scale-up programme, the Tech Rocketship Awards, has today announced its shortlisted finalists.

Seeking to identify the most innovative, fast-growing tech businesses, the awards drew entries from all corners of Europe, Israel and Turkey.

The awards identify the brightest and best tech companies and accelerates the global growth of its winners, through curated programmes connecting them with the UK's leading ecosystem of investors, incubators and High Potential Opportunity clusters.

Previous applicants who have set up operations in the UK include companies such as Inobat, Plan A, Swapcard, Docmatic and SeeTrue AI.

Finalists:

- 5G – Neutron (Spain). Open-API cloud platform that makes private LTE/5G and Neutral Host simple and scalable for operators and end-users.
- Cyber Security – Facephi (Spain). Provides secure user digital identity verification and specialises in digital onboarding and biometric authentication solutions.
- Climate Tech – Monolithos (Greece). Manufactures direct-fit aftermarket automotive catalytic converters.
- Digital Health – Enbiosis (Turkey). Analyses the human gut microbiome using metadata and AI to provide personalised health and wellness solutions.
- Artificial Intelligence – Jungle AI (The Netherlands). Applies AI to increase the uptime and performance of electromechanical assets such as wind turbines, solar farms or industrial production lines.
- AgriTech – Blue White Robotics (Israel). The 'robots-as-a-service' platform provides solutions for building autonomous farms.

Full details about the competition, including terms and conditions are on the [Tech Rocketship Awards website.](#))

The six selected finalists will go to the Web Summit, taking place in Lisbon from 1-4 November 2022 to pitch live to a high profile judging panel to become the Gold, Silver and Bronze winners. Winners will be announced at the UK pavilion alongside a new Diversity in Tech award for underrepresented founders.

Chris Barton, Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner for Europe said:

There is no better place for ambitious tech companies to grow than the UK. This is the number one country in Europe for Unicorns, and UK tech VC investment is the third largest in the world. Our tech sector is the home of forward-thinking innovators, venture capital, R&D clusters and opportunities for growth across the whole of the UK.

Tech Rocketships will provide the lucky winners with a rocket-powered, fully-tailored direct route to the financiers, incubators, tech-savvy customers, and all the infrastructure needed to help them make that next great leap from ambitious scale-up to unicorn."

Kenan Poleo, Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner for EECAN (Eastern Europe Central Asian Network) said:

Turkish companies responded brilliantly to the Tech Rocketship Awards. I wish the finalists luck! The awards offer companies in the vibrant Turkish tech ecosystem a rocket-powered, fully-tailored direct route to the financiers, incubators, tech-savvy customers, and infrastructure needed to help them make that next great leap from ambitious scale-up to unicorn.

Ian Bowen-Morris, Head of International Marketing at the Department for International Trade said:

The GREAT Global Trade campaign is proud to support the Tech Rocketship Awards. It is a fantastic platform enabling international businesses to take advantage of the UK's position as a world-leading destination in which to set up and scale up innovative technology companies.

Notes to editors:

- The Tech Rocketship Awards Categories are: Artificial Intelligence (AI), 5G, Agri-Tech, Digital Health, Cybersecurity, Climate Tech, with a new Diversity in Tech Award for underrepresented founders.

- Official Awards Partners are EY, Goodwille, Tech UK and Tech Nation.
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Deaf jurors supported by sign language interpreter for first time

- First Deaf jurors complete jury service with British Sign Language interpreter support
- Law change allows interpreters in the jury deliberation room as the thirteenth person
- Move opens jury service up to thousands more people

This summer, Karen – a volunteer at charity DeafCOG in London – became the first Deaf person to complete jury service with a BSL interpreter at Croydon Crown Court, deliberating over a racially aggravated harassment case. Karen was also chosen by the other members of the jury to act as the jury foreperson – the spokesperson responsible for announcing the verdict.

Others are now following in Karen's footsteps, including Paul who served on a serious sexual assault case at Norwich Crown Court last month. Both jurors had three interpreters who rotated every 20 minutes to assist them, as well as the full support of the judge and HM Courts and Tribunals Service staff.

The move follows changes brought in through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, which allow BSL interpreters into the jury deliberation room. It is expected that this will open up jury service to over 80,000 Deaf people across England and Wales.

Speaking about her experiences in court, Karen said:

My jury experience at Croydon Crown Court went smoothly and exceeded my expectations.

The staff, from the jury manager, ushers, clerks and judges were extremely aware of the needs of myself and the BSL interpreting team. I was made to feel included every step of the way.

An excellent and amazing opportunity for me and what a great start to leading the way for other Deaf jurors in the future, now that BSL is recognised as a language.

Paul said:

Being on jury duty has been a dream of mine and I believe the Deaf/BSL community has so much to offer. When the law changed to

allow the Deaf/BSL community to sit on a jury, and I received my summons, naturally I was excited but nervous as I did not know what to expect.

Upon arriving at Norwich Crown Court, I was made to feel very welcome and there were three BSL interpreters ready. It was surreal experience and the whole process was streamlined and smooth. The training was clear and easy to follow, then the trial began, and I was amazed that I was treated equally to other jurors. This gave me a sense of respect as the other jurors were keen to work with me and make me feel involved.

The trial ran over and the interpreters I had been working with were now unavailable. However, I was pleased to see the judge and court staff went above and beyond to find alternative interpreters for the rest of the trial. It was sorted without a hindrance. The judge requested feedback from me on how to improve for future cases and expressed a strong desire to make sure Norwich Crown Court is accessible and fair for all. I was deeply touched by this.

I was so honoured to be selected as the foreperson by other members of the jury, making me the first Deaf/BSL foreperson at Norwich Crown Court! It was a very empowering experience and I want to say thank you to everyone at the court and in the jury for making this possible. I look forward to seeing more of the Deaf/BSL community being part of the justice system, as it should be.

Guidance on working with jurors supported by BSL interpreters was provided to court staff, judges and other jury members to ensure they could communicate effectively with Karen and Paul, as well as the interpreters. Printed oaths for the interpreters were also placed in the courtrooms which contained new wording specific to not influencing, interfering or disclosing the deliberation of the jury.

Justice Minister Gareth Johnson said:

We are breaking down the barriers for Deaf people carrying out jury service, ensuring they can fully and equally participate in court proceedings.

I am delighted that the door is now open to thousands more potential jurors as we establish a more accessible and inclusive justice system for all.

Work and Pensions Secretary Chloe Smith said:

The first Deaf juror completing jury service is an historic moment on our path towards a more inclusive and accessible society. I am so glad to hear of Karen's positive experience while undertaking

an important act of public service.

Earlier this year the British Sign Language Act became law, and I'm delighted to see that our work to recognise BSL as a language is fulfilling its promise to help remove barriers faced by the D/deaf community.

The move has been well-received within the Deaf community.

Mark Atkinson, Chief Executive at RNID, said:

RNID and our supporters are delighted that deaf BSL users can now serve on juries and are no longer excluded from this act of citizenship. This move will allow tens of thousands of deaf people who use BSL as their first language to take part in jury service, a duty which all of us should have a responsibility to undertake.

We are pleased to see another step forward towards inclusion for the Deaf community, yet there are still many barriers which exist for deaf BSL users in society. We're pleased to see this positive step, and eagerly anticipate many more barriers being broken as Government works towards the delivery of the British Sign Language Act.

David Buxton, British Deaf Association Chair, said:

After decades of campaigning, the 87,000 Deaf people in the UK whose first or preferred language is BSL are now finally able to serve as jurors alongside their hearing fellow citizens.

We are pleased that the Ministry of Justice has recognised that a BSL interpreter is there to support the Deaf juror, rather than to act as a thirteenth juror. Interpreters follow a strict professional Code of Conduct which prevents them from influencing the judicial process in any way.

This represents a crucial and long overdue step forward in the equality, inclusion and participation of Deaf people in our democracy, combined with the BSL Act – which passed on the same day in April 2022 – recognising British Sign Language as a language of Great Britain in law for the first time.

Barriers to Deaf people's full democratic participation remain – we have yet to see the election of a Deaf MP – but we hope that this important step demonstrates the potentially huge contribution that the Deaf community in the UK can make to our society when reasonable adjustments such as BSL interpreters are provided as standard.

We look forward to continue working with the Government to break down further unnecessary barriers and challenge discriminatory attitudes and practices in future.

Notes to Editors

- According to the [British Deaf Association](#), an estimated 87,000 people in the UK use British Sign Language as their first or preferred language.
- In order to comply with GDPR, jurors are identified by first name only.