

Funding for Dorset communities

The money has been granted to Dorset Council to support the community near to the Winfrith site during the coronavirus pandemic.

The council plans to invest the money into three foodbanks in the area, providing personal protective equipment for volunteers and the provision of arts and craft resources to help with schoolwork and other activities for vulnerable youngsters.

The funding forms part of the 12 grants, worth £300,000 in total, Magnox has made available to local authorities or charities where a Magnox site is located.

Gwen Parry-Jones, Magnox Chief Executive, said:

Many community groups are carrying out positive work, supporting the most vulnerable in their areas. This work is vital, and a key part of Magnox's response to COVID-19 is to help other organisations deal with the pandemic wherever we can.

In this time of national crisis, Magnox has agreed with the NDA that we should make available up to £25,000 at each site from the Magnox Socio-economic Scheme for use by local community groups on COVID-19 related activities. Magnox is committed to assisting the communities surrounding our sites, as our communities have supported us for over 50 years, and we hope this funding will go some way to supporting the essential work being delivered.

Councillor Laura Miller, Dorset Council's portfolio holder for Adult Social Care and Health, added: "On behalf of everyone at Dorset Council, I would like to whole-heartedly thank Magnox for their generous donation.

"We have arrangements in place across the council area to ensure emergency community food provision is available – free of charge – for those who need it.

"This significant Magnox donation will go some way in ensuring that we have sufficient foodbank stock ready as we continue to keep our volunteers, foodbank and community hub staff safe as they provide a lifeline service to some of the most vulnerable residents in our communities.

"I have seen first-hand the work carried out by the foodbank, their volunteers and our community voluntary sector over the last few weeks who are doing such a fantastic job in very challenging circumstances and I can't praise them highly enough."

Furloughed workers help the government tackle coronavirus

- Volunteers took on a variety of roles including analytical and digital projects
- Government benefited from volunteers' knowledge and volunteers gained valuable experience

More than 100 people who have been furloughed from their normal day jobs because of coronavirus have been able to volunteer to help the government tackle the crisis.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the government launched the [Industry Partnering Voluntary Scheme](#) to utilise the skills of people who could no longer do their normal jobs.

The project has seen more than 100 people matched to short-term voluntary roles in government, ranging from analytical and digital projects to work focused on the frontline response to the virus.

The government's Chief People Officer, Rupert McNeil, said:

I am pleased to see so many people get involved in this important scheme which supports the national effort in maintaining public services during the Covid-19 crisis.

I thank everyone who has been involved from the businesses, government departments, Civil Service HR colleagues, and particularly the volunteers themselves, who are applying their transferable skills for the greater public good.

As part of the project, volunteers received all the training necessary to work in central government and went through all the necessary security checks.

The volunteers worked with a wide range of departments and public sector organisations, giving them the experience of working within government and giving the government the benefit of their skills and business knowledge.

Companies whose employees took part in the project include: Harvey Nichols, British Airways, Wincanton, Eastern Airways, Easyjet, DFS, Gobeyond Partners, Hays, Heathrow Airport, Marstons, Moto, PA Consulting, Superdrug, TUI, the British Council, The Football Association and David Lloyd Leisure.

All of the volunteers gave as many hours as they were able to and continued

to be paid their agreed salary or furlough rate from their usual employer.

[Read more about the Industry Partnering Voluntary Scheme](#)

[Space Rocket Challenges for the engineers of tomorrow](#)

The challenges, taking place between 16-30 June, will give participants the chance to design their own space rocket, make a rocket at home and learn more about the UK's space sector.

There will be three challenges that are open to all ages and include: a Space Rocket design competition, Launch and Land challenge – as part of NPL's regular Measurement at Home series, and a space-themed quiz.

Entries are welcome from individuals, teams, families, schools – anyone who can stretch their imagination to infinity and beyond. Experts at NPL and UK Space Agency will judge all entries and prizes, including a 3D-printed model of the winning rocket design and a tour of British Aerospace Manufacturer, Reaction Engines' facility in Oxfordshire.

Professor Richard Crowther, Chief Engineer, UK Space Agency said:

The UK has played a pioneering role in space science for over 50 years and today our ambition is to be Europe's leading small satellite launch destination. We look forward to seeing the creativity and imagination of these young engineers. Perhaps one day they could be designing the rockets we see launching from UK spaceports, propelling us into a new era of space exploration.

As the UK's National Measurement Institute, NPL recognises the importance of promoting STEM activities and inspiring the next generation. The UK Space Agency supports STEM-based activity addressing the skills needs of the space sector and to raise awareness of the UK's space programme and STEM subjects in general.

Andrew Hanson MBE, Outreach Manager, NPL said:

We've been running NPL Water Rockets for over 20 years, and in 2020 are super-excited to be teaming up with UKSA with several novel twists to engage a wide audience taking creative engineering into space. NPL's outreach activity, whilst offering fun and engaging ways of interacting with STEM, is also key to raising the importance of STEM education and the relevance of measurement

science to our everyday lives.

The restrictions faced by everyone in the last few months means NPL is unable to run the 21st NPL Water Rocket Challenge in the usual format, but by turning it into a virtual rocket-based event, NPL hopes participants can still have fun, learn about science and the UK's space sector and compete to win great prizes.

To find out more visit [NPL's Space Rocket Challenges for 2020](#).

[Estate agent directors disqualified for roles in illegal cartel](#)

Stephen Jones and Neil Mackenzie were directors at estate agents Richard Worth and Michael Hardy, respectively, from September 2008 to May 2015. During this time, their firms took part in a cartel with 2 other local estate agents in which they conspired together to set minimum rates for commission on the sale of residential properties in Wokingham, Winnersh, Crowthorne, Bracknell and Warfield – where they were the leading estate agents at that time.

Both have now been disqualified for 6 and a half years for their roles in the cartel, meaning they cannot act as directors of any companies or be involved in the management of any company based in England, Scotland or Wales during this time.

The move follows a Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigation into the cartel, which found that the 4 estate agents maintained the illegal activity for almost 7 years. They exchanged confidential information on pricing and held meetings to make sure all members of the cartel enforced and maintained the agreed minimum rates.

This meant that homeowners in the affected areas were denied the chance of securing the best possible deal when selling their property because they were unable to meaningfully shop around all their local estate agents for a better commission rate.

And, as a result, 3 of the 4 estate agents – including Richard Worth and Michael Hardy – were [fined over £600,000 for their illegal behaviour](#).

Michael Grenfell, Executive Director of Enforcement, said:

Selling your home can be a stressful and expensive experience, and one that shouldn't be made harder by estate agents conspiring to cheat homeowners out of the best deal.

Company directors have an important responsibility to make sure their firms don't take part in this kind of anti-competitive behaviour.

Today's disqualifications should send a clear message to the sector – stay on the right side of the law or face the consequences.

The 2 disqualifications announced today bring the total number of directors disqualified following a CMA investigation to 18. As part of the Company Directors Disqualification Act, the CMA can seek the disqualification of any director where their company has broken competition law. It is one of a number of tools the CMA can use to protect consumers from anti-competitive behaviour.

The CMA also runs a '[Cheating or competing?](#)' campaign, which aims to educate businesses about which practices are illegal and urges people to come forward if they suspect a business has taken part in cartel behaviour, such as rigging contracts or price fixing. It has also issued a range of guidance to help businesses understand more about how to comply with competition law.

1. The disqualification undertakings are available on the [CMA's case page](#). Mr Jones and Mr Mackenzie each gave disqualification undertakings after the CMA commenced court proceedings seeking orders for their disqualification. The CMA's acceptance of the undertakings given by Mr Jones and Mr Mackenzie brings those court proceedings to an end.
2. Under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986, the CMA has the power to apply to the court for an order disqualifying a director from holding company directorships or performing certain roles in relation to a company for a specified period if a company of which he or she is a director has breached competition law and their conduct makes them unfit to be a director or be involved in the management of a company. The Act also allows the CMA to accept a disqualification undertaking from a director instead of bringing proceedings. A disqualification undertaking has the same legal effect as a disqualification order.
3. The other 2 estate agency firms involved in the illegal minimum fee arrangement qualified for leniency under the [CMA's leniency policy](#). Under the policy the CMA will not seek the disqualification of their cooperating directors, as long as the estate agents continue to comply with the terms of their leniency agreements with the CMA.
4. The CMA is also currently seeking director disqualifications in 2 further separate proceedings before the court. One in relation to its probe into [Residential estate agency services in the Burnham-on-Sea area](#), and one in relation to its [Supply of precast concrete drainage products: civil investigation](#).
5. The total number of directors disqualified following a CMA investigation includes 1 director who was disqualified on his conviction for the criminal cartel offence in relation to the [supply of precast concrete drainage products](#)
6. For more information on the CMA follow us

on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Sign up to our [email alerts](#) to receive updates on Competition Act 1998 and civil cartels cases.

7. Media enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gov.uk, or call 020 3738 6460.

[Avian Influenza: UK disease-free with continued vigilance required](#)

Press release

The UK now meets international requirements to declare freedom from Avian Influenza, as the chief vet urges continued vigilance.



Chickens on free range poultry farm. Credit Getty images

The Chief Veterinary Officer has announced the UK has met international requirements to declare itself free from Avian Influenza (AI) H5N3, but reiterated calls for all poultry keepers to remain vigilant for signs of disease, as there is a real and constant threat.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) continues to circulate in Europe and as winter approaches later in the year, the risk of migratory wild birds infecting domestic poultry will rise. The UK was previously declared free of Avian Flu in September 2017 and has remained free of highly pathogenic avian influenza since then. But a low pathogenic strain disease returned in December 2019 which was quickly met by Government action.

In December, a single case of low pathogenic avian flu of the H5N3 strain, which poses no threat to human health, was confirmed at a commercial chicken farm in Suffolk. The Animal and Plant Health Agency put movement restrictions in place to limit the spread of disease and carried out thorough investigations into the source and possible spread of infection and concluded that the most likely source was indirect contact with wild birds. The full

epidemiology report is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

The UK Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), Christine Middlemiss, urged keepers to remain vigilant for signs of disease and reiterated [the need for good biosecurity at all times](#):

Declaring the UK free from avian flu is an important milestone that will help our efforts to re-open export markets. The case in December was met with swift action by the APHA and industry and I would like to thank everyone for their efforts in helping us to very effectively contain the disease.

However, I urge all keepers to be vigilant – there is a constant risk of avian flu from wild birds and this will increase later in the year when winter approaches, temperatures fall, and migratory birds arrive in the UK.

All poultry keepers should take steps to reduce the risk to their birds by maintaining good robust biosecurity at all times, such as cleaning footwear, feeding birds indoors, and minimising contact with wild birds. Building these simple actions into routines now can help prepare for any future outbreaks.

The government continues to monitor the international situation and carry out surveillance in poultry and wild birds and publish regular disease updates.

Further information

- Under World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) rules, three months must elapse from the application of measures to prevent the spread of disease after cleansing and disinfection of the last infected premises before a country can be declared disease-free. Countries are required to fulfil a number of requirements on biosecure disposal of carcasses, the application of effective disinfection and surveillance.
- H5N3 avian flu was confirmed at a commercial premises in Suffolk on 10 December 2019 with further information available [here](#). Secondary cleansing and disinfection was completed on 13 March 2020.
- The UK CVO will declare on the UK's behalf by submitting an evidence paper to OIE for publication on the OIE WAHIS website alongside other countries that have already self-declared.
- Read and download our latest biosecurity guidance and our advice poster for keepers of poultry (PDF, 1 page).

Published 15 June 2020