

Project to combat natural disasters among Newton Prize winners

- UK researchers work in partnership with other countries on global problems
- £1 million Newton Prize funds 4 pioneering research projects
- project winners focussed on strengthening food security and talking climate change

The annual £1 million Newton Prize is given to projects between the UK and Newton Fund partner countries around the world which help to solve global development challenges.

This year the Newton Prize focussed on partnerships between the UK and China, Indonesia and Philippines.

The 4 winning projects for 2019 are:

1. Protecting coastal communities from the impacts of climate change (awarded up to £195,000)

Researchers from the University of Huddersfield and the Institute of Technology Bandung in Indonesia have improved Indonesia's communications and warning procedures for coastal disasters such as flooding and tsunamis, as climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather.

2. Converting sewage into fertiliser (awarded up to £199,000)

Researchers from the University of Surrey worked with the De La Salle University, in the Philippines. They have found a way to convert sewage into nutrient-rich fertiliser to improve people's health and prosperity. In the Metropolitan Manila region of the Philippines around three quarters of all sewage flows untreated into the local rivers and lakes. This pollution creates major health risks and has a damaging effect on the economy.

3. Improving the lives of people in cities and elderly people (awarded up to £198,000)

Researchers from Northumbria University and the Institute of Software, Chinese Academy of Sciences led work to improve transportation services and offer better access and suitability of services for the elderly.

4. A new way to monitor crops for global food security (awarded up to £459,000)

The Chair's Award was given to a project between Universities College London, Institute of Agricultural Resources and Regional Planning, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences to improve agricultural productivity. Food production is under threat from a combination of urban development, shrinking space for

arable land, groundwater depletion and other challenges. Climate change is exacerbating these pressures. This UK-China research collaboration's new method, using satellite technology, has improved accuracy of crop monitoring by ten percent. The state-of-the-art techniques are already being applied to other countries including Ghana, Argentina and the UK.

This is the third year of the Newton Prize, which is part of the Newton Fund. It builds research and innovation partnerships with 17 partner countries to support economic development and social welfare.

It also aims to develop research and innovation capacity for long-term sustainable growth. The prize allows researchers to take their existing Newton Fund projects to the next level.

Newton Prize 2020 will celebrate partnerships between the UK and Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, South Africa, and Turkey.

On 20 February 2020, the UK government will launch a new fast-track visa scheme to attract the world's top scientists, researchers and mathematicians. This bespoke Global Talent route is another demonstration of the government's commitment to supporting top talent in the scientific and research community.

[Further crackdown on illegal schools](#)

The Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has pledged to continue to crack down on dangerous illegal schools to make sure children are safe and not exposed to risky practices or extreme influences.

Ofsted will be given an extra £400,000 to help investigate unregistered independent schools and support the regulator in bringing together evidence for prosecution. The Secretary of State has also reiterated the Department for Education's commitment to bring forward new legislation to strengthen the watchdog's powers.

This latest funding injection will build on the £3million invested since 2016 to fund a joint Department for Education and Ofsted team that has seen 72 illegal settings stop operating unlawfully and resulted in three prosecutions – leading to convictions on all three cases.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Unregistered schools present a serious risk to children. They often do not offer the kind of balanced, informative curriculum all schools should, and can expose pupils to dangerous and extreme influences.

That's why I am determined that anyone found to be running one

faces the full force of the law. This extra investment in Ofsted will build on the £3 million we have already committed – and send a very strong message to illegal schools which continue to operate.

We remain committed to strengthening Ofsted's powers to make sure they can shut down illegal settings, and helping legitimate settings to make sure they know the rules.

In 2016, the Department for Education established a joint team with Ofsted to tackle unregistered schools.

Between 1 January 2016 and 31 August 2019, Ofsted has undertaken 362 inspections of 293 suspected unregistered independent schools, 83 settings were issued with a warning notice and Ofsted made sure 72 of these stopped operating illegally. There have also been three successful prosecutions so far. This additional funding will allow Ofsted to continue this critical work and ensure illegal activity is uncovered and justice is delivered.

To further address these issue and make sure Ofsted has the legal powers it needs to tackle unregistered schools, the Government intends to review and strengthen the legislation in place at the next opportunity.

The government is also launching a consultation today, seeking views on legislation which will require any setting attended full-time by children of compulsory school age to be registered with the Department for Education and meet the independent school standards.

In addition to this, the department will soon be publishing a new out-of-school safeguarding code of practice, to ensure legitimate out-of-school settings such as part-time tuition centres, sports clubs and religious settings offering education in their own faith know how to create a safe environment for the children in their care; and supporting guidance for parents – setting out key questions to consider, and red flags to look out for, when choosing a setting for their child.

[Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Costa Rica & to the Republic of Nicaragua in October 2020](#)



Mr Ben Lyster-Binns has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Costa Rica and Her Majesty's Non-Resident Ambassador to the Republic of Nicaragua in succession to Mr Ross Denny who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Lyster-Binns will take up his appointment in October 2020.

Full name: Benjamin Edward Noel Lyster-Binns

Married to: Belinda Lyster-Binns

Children: Three

2016 to 2019 FCO, Head of Joint FCO-DFID Somalia Unit

2012 to 2016 Montevideo, Her Majesty's Ambassador

2010 to 2012 FCO, Deputy Head, International Organisations Department

2009 to 2010 FCO, Senior Policy Advisor, Security Policy Department

2007 to 2009 FCO, Senior Policy Advisor, Counter Terrorism Department

2003 to 2007 Lisbon, Deputy Head of Mission

2000 to 2003 FCO, Deputy European Correspondent, Head of General Affairs and External Relations Councils & G8 Team, Common Foreign and Security Policy Department

1998 to 2000 FCO, Desk Officer, Human Rights Policy Department, including a secondment to the non-governmental organisation Article 19 (1999)

1994 to 1998 Muscat, Information Officer

1991 to 1994 Lilongwe, Development Secretary

1989 to 1991 FCO, Desk Officer, Non-Proliferation Department

1989 Joined FCO

Further information

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Change of British High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago in July 2020



Ms Harriet Cross has been appointed British High Commissioner to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in succession to Mr Tim Stew MBE who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Ms Cross will take up her appointment during July 2020.

Full name: Harriet Victoria Cross

Married to: Philip Saltonstall

2016 to present Boston, Consul-General
2015 to 2016 Sana'a, Deputy Head of Mission
2013 to 2014 FC0, Head of Yemen Team, Middle East and North Africa Directorate
2011 to 2013 University of York, International Relations Manager
2007 to 2010 New York, First Secretary – Human Rights and Head of Communications, UK Permanent Mission to the United Nations
2004 to 2006 National Crime Squad, International Policy Adviser (on secondment)
2002 to 2004 FC0, Head of Democracy and Rule of Law Section, Human Rights Policy Department
1998 to 2002 Rabat, Second Secretary – Politics and Press
1997 to 1998 FC0, Desk Officer – UK Presidency, EU Department (External)

Further information

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Mumps outbreaks across England

Provisional data from Public Health England (PHE) show that there were 5,042 lab-confirmed cases of mumps in England in 2019, compared to 1,066 cases in 2018. This is the highest number of cases since 2009.

The rise in cases looks set to continue in 2020, with 546 confirmed cases in January 2020 compared to 191 during the same period in 2019.

The steep rise in cases in 2019 has been largely driven by outbreaks in universities and colleges. Many of the cases in 2019 were seen in the so-called 'Wakefield cohorts' – young adults born in the late nineties and early 2000s who missed out on the MMR vaccine when they were children. These cohorts are now old enough to attend college and university and are likely to continue fuelling outbreaks into 2020.

Mumps is a viral infection that used to be common in children before the introduction of the MMR vaccine.

It is most recognisable by the painful swelling of the glands at the side of the face, giving a person with mumps a distinctive 'hamster face' appearance. Other symptoms include headaches, joint pain and fever, which may develop a few days before the swelling. If you suspect that you or a family member has mumps, contact your GP.

Vaccination is the safest and most effective way to protect yourself from mumps. It prevents most, but not all, cases of mumps and even if a vaccinated person does get mumps, they will likely have a less severe illness than an unvaccinated person.

Dr Vanessa Saliba, Consultant Epidemiologist at Public Health England, said:

The best protection against mumps and its complications is to have 2 doses of the MMR vaccine. It's never too late to catch up.

We encourage all students and young people who may have missed out on their MMR vaccine in the past to contact their GP practice and get up to date as soon as possible.

Matt Hancock, Health Secretary said:

The rise in mumps cases is alarming and yet another example of the long-term damage caused by anti-vax information.

Science proves that vaccines are the best form of defence against a host of potentially deadly diseases and are safer and more effective than ever before. Those who claim otherwise are risking people's lives.

Our vaccine strategy will soon be published outlining how we will increase uptake, limit the spread of vaccine misinformation and ensure every child receives two doses of their MMR vaccination. Anyone who is unsure whether they are fully covered should contact their GP.

PHE and NHS England have recently launched an MMR catch-up programme for children aged 10 to 11 years old to ensure they are fully vaccinated if they missed out in childhood.

Although most people usually recover from mumps without treatment, in some cases it can cause complications such as inflammation of the testicles, and in rare cases, meningitis and deafness.