

Press release: Environment Secretary backs further restrictions on neonicotinoid pesticides

Tougher restrictions on neonicotinoid pesticides are justified by the growing weight of scientific evidence they are harmful to bees and other pollinators, Environment Secretary Michael Gove said today.

Setting out the UK's position, the Secretary of State said the UK supports further restrictions on the use of these pesticides. Unless the scientific evidence changes, the government will maintain these increased restrictions post-Brexit.

This follows advice from the [UK government's advisory body on pesticides](#) which said scientific evidence now suggests the environmental risks posed by neonicotinoids – particularly to our bees and pollinators – are greater than previously understood, supporting the case for further restrictions.

Research estimates the value of the UK's 1,500 species of pollinators to crops at £400-680million per year due to improved productivity.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

I have set out our vision for a Green Brexit in which environmental standards are not only maintained but enhanced.

I've always been clear I will be led by the science on this matter. The weight of evidence now shows the risks neonicotinoids pose to our environment, particularly to the bees and other pollinators which play such a key part in our £100bn food industry, is greater than previously understood. I believe this justifies further restrictions on their use. We cannot afford to put our pollinator populations at risk.

I recognise the impact further restrictions will have on farmers and I am keen to work with them to explore alternative approaches both now and as we design a new agricultural policy outside the European Union.

Since December 2013, the EU has banned the use of three neonicotinoids – Clothianidin, Imidacloprid and Thiamethoxam – on a number of crops attractive to bees, such as oilseed rape.

The European Commission has proposed restricting the same three neonicotinoids to only allow their use on plants in glasshouses. Currently, their use is banned for oilseed rape, spring cereals and sprays for winter cereals, but they can be used to treat sugar beet and as seed treatments for

winter cereals. Should this proposal be adopted, the UK would have the right to consider emergency authorisations. We would only do so in exceptional circumstances where there is a real need for the products and the risk to bees and other pollinators is sufficiently low.

Defra's Chief Scientific Advisor Professor Ian Boyd said:

The important question is whether neonicotinoid use results in harmful effects on populations of bees and other pollinators as a whole.

Recent field-based experiments have suggested these effects could exist. In combination with the observation of widespread and increasing use of these chemicals, the available evidence justifies taking further steps to restrict the use of neonicotinoids.

Defra has today also given an update on its [National Pollinator Strategy](#), which shows encouraging progress on its aims to make farms, towns, cities and the countryside better places for our bees and pollinators. The strategy was launched in 2014, following independent research which showed an overall decline in the UK's wild bee diversity over the last 50 years. It sets out a collaborative plan to improve the state of bees and other pollinators, and recognises pesticides as one of the key threats to their populations. The government will continue to work with partners such as Friends of the Earth, British Beekeepers' Association and Kew to deliver the ambitious strategy.

[News story: £30 million for business and graduate partnerships](#)

Innovate UK has announced an extra £30 million of funding for Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), which connect UK businesses with an academic or research organisation and qualified graduate to work on innovation projects.

It will allow significant expansion of the KTP programme. Currently, there are 630 graduates and post-doctoral researchers employed in KTPs. These include industrial research and development and entrepreneurial roles.

This funding comes from government's [National Productivity Investment Fund](#). It will help to build the pipeline of high-skilled research talent necessary for a growing innovation economy.

The investment was announced today at [Innovate 2017](#).

[Ella's Kitchen: transforming the organic baby food market](#)

Businesses of all sizes

Businesses that have previously taken part in KTPs include [Dyson](#), [Jaguar Land Rover](#), [Rolls-Royce](#), [Sainsbury's](#) and [Unilever](#). Baby food brand, [Ella's Kitchen](#), has run 3 schemes, working with the [University of Reading](#).

The majority of KTPs are made up of small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – around 80% of all those run.

Science Minister, Jo Johnson, said:

Through Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, businesses of all sizes are partnering with our world-leading academics and researchers to learn how new skills and thinking can increase their competitiveness and productivity, and this extra funding will ensure even more UK businesses continue to innovate and grow.

By putting science, research and innovation at the heart of our Industrial Strategy, and emphasising the benefits of commercialising research, we are building on our strengths in R&D and delivering benefits across the country.

Stimulating innovation and producing successful outcomes

Ruth McKernan, Chief Executive, said:

We are committing significantly more funding this year on KTPs. This enables an increase to the scheme, with additional KTPs becoming more closely aligned to [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund areas](#).

Companies that have used KTPs know their development value in bringing in excellent staff with cutting-edge academic knowledge. The current tried-and-tested model is widely recognised – and proven over 40 years of operation – for its excellence in stimulating innovation and producing successful outcomes.

There are many innovative companies, particularly SMEs, which could benefit from the academic mentoring that a KTP provides.

[Knowledge Transfer Partnerships at Northumbria University](#)

Press release: Attorney General visits law students in Birmingham

Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP will meet with University of Birmingham students and staff when he visits the law school today (Thursday 9 November).

The Attorney, who is the Government's Pro Bono Champion, is making the visit as part of National Pro Bono Week – a nationwide campaign to increase understanding and interest in pro bono work.

The University won an award for Outstanding Contribution by a Law School at the Attorney General's Pro Bono awards earlier this year. The Attorney will meet law students who give free legal advice to some of the most vulnerable people in the community, on issues including family and employment law. The University runs a number of different projects that enable students to get involved in a range of activities, while allowing them to develop their knowledge of how the law operates in the real world. The Attorney General said:

"Pro bono work often starts at universities and colleges, where students gain first-hand experience of providing legal advice and help to those in need.

"I strongly encourage both students and established lawyers to explore what sort of pro bono help they might be able to provide, as it will enhance their careers and make a real difference to those who receive it."

Professor Michael Whitby, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Head of the College of Arts and Law at Birmingham Law School said:

"We are delighted to be welcoming the Attorney General to Birmingham Law School during National Pro Bono Week. Our Pro Bono Group represents a significant commitment by staff and students at the University of Birmingham to making a positive difference to our community at global, national and international level.

"This initiative is generously supported by members of the city of Birmingham's legal profession. The Group's focus on increasing access to justice accords with the core values of our civic university and exemplifies Birmingham's commitment to developing graduates with attributes and experiences that make them competitive and valuable employees."

The Attorney, who superintends the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), will also visit the CPS West Midlands office in Birmingham.

CPS West Midlands recently underwent an inspection by Her Majesty Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate with inspectors roundly praising performance. They found hate crime conviction rates had much improved from previous inspections, and that the Area had been working well to improve outcomes for victims and witnesses.

[News story: Programme for UK-EU Article 50 negotiations, 9-10 November](#)

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[News story: British and Australian military work with Vietnam People's Army](#)

Military logistics experts from the RAF, British Army and RAAF have helped the Vietnam People's Army prepare for its peacekeeping deployment to South Sudan in 2018.

The UK, Australian and Vietnamese military staffs discussed solutions to the logistics issues and challenges the Vietnamese military will face in spring 2018, when it is envisaged that Vietnamese military medical personnel will deploy on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to replace UK medical personnel at the UN Level 2 Hospital at Bentiu.

The UK's Defence Attaché to Vietnam, Group Captain David Houghton:

The three-day discussion was part of the continued cooperation on peacekeeping issues between the UK and Vietnam.

The initial deployment of Vietnamese military personnel and critical equipment from Vietnam to Juba, South Sudan will be undertaken by the Royal Australian Air Force using a C-17 aircraft. Once on the ground in Juba, the soldiers of Vietnam People's Army will move to Bentiu where they will take over the provision of the Level 2 Hospital capability from UK military personnel.