

State-of-the-art tree health laboratory opens to help protect UK forests

A state-of-the-art laboratory conducting innovative research into tree pests and diseases has been officially opened today (Friday 13 May) by Defra and the Forestry Commission, as part of National Plant Health Week.

The £5.8 million Forest Research Holt Laboratory, located within the Alice Holt Forest in Surrey, will bring together leading scientists to undertake research on pests and pathogens which could be detrimental or seriously damaging to our forests. This will inform UK-wide efforts to combat ongoing pest and disease outbreaks, including from Oak processionary moth, *Ips typographus* and *Phytophthora pluvialis*, as well as emerging potential threats from abroad as a result of our warming climate, such as Emerald ash borer and Citrus longhorn beetle.

The launch of the Holt Laboratory and the Centre for Forest Protection represents a significant expansion of the UK's capacity and capability to combat tree pests and diseases and manage emerging threats, including climate change. By assessing the pests and pathogens in a contained laboratory, scientists from Forest Research – Great Britain's principal organisation for forestry and tree-related research – will be able to study them in a safe and controlled manner using cutting-edge technology and equipment.

New statistics released by Forest Research today show a record number of tree pests and diseases are being reported. The [TreeAlert service](#) received 3790 reports from the public over the past year (April 2021 -- March 2022) – a nearly 25% increase on the previous year. The most commonly reported pest and disease were Oak processionary moth and Ash dieback, respectively.

Minister for Biosecurity, Lord Benyon said:

This is a significant moment and important expansion of the UK's capacity to overcome tree pests and diseases – and protect our forests.

Six months on from COP26 and Royal Assent of our Environment Act, it is fitting to be bringing forward cutting-edge research that will be central to keeping our trees healthy and resilient as we deliver on our ambitious commitment to treble tree planting rates by the end of this Parliament.

Chair of the Forestry Commission, Sir William Worsley said:

The threat to the health of our trees from pests and diseases is

real and increasing. Trees are vital economic, environmental and social assets and so it is imperative that we do all we can to reduce these threats.

The opening of this new laboratory demonstrates the significant investment that the Government and the Forestry Commission are making to ensure the long-term resilience of our trees.

Forest Research Chief Executive, James Pendlebury said:

Pests and diseases pose an existential threat to our treescapes. The research conducted at the Holt Laboratory as part of the Centre for Forest Protection will be pivotal in our long-term ability to combat these threats and safeguard our treescapes for future generations.

This state-of-the-art facility builds on a long-term programme to protect our trees and forests from existing threats and ensures that we are at the forefront of defence against future risks.

Professor Richard Buggs, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, said:

Kew and Forest Research have been collaborating together on tree health issues for some time now, so it's great to be coming together into a formal partnership for the Centre for Forest Protection.

Together, we can devise new ways to protect our trees and enhance their resilience. Ash dieback, acute oak decline, Dutch elm disease, here we come!

The Centre for Forest Protection, a new collaborative, virtual research network led jointly by Forest Research and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew also launches today with a mission to protect forests, woodlands and trees from environmental and socioeconomic threats now and in the future. This will involve innovative science, interdisciplinary research, expert advice, and training – supporting scientists across the UK and around the world. The broad remit of research and knowledge sharing will include investigations into understanding the genetic basis for resistance to high impact pests like ash dieback, which could inform future breeding programmes or reintroduction strategies for vulnerable species like ash and elm. Many of the forward-thinking research projects undertaken as part of the Centre for Forest Protection will be conducted at the Holt Laboratory. The successful launch of the Centre for Forest Protection delivers on a key commitment outlined in the [England Trees Action Plan](#), which sets out the Government's long-term plan for England's trees, woodlands and forests.

Today's announcement also comes ahead of the publication in summer this year

of the new GB Plant Biosecurity Strategy, which will set out a biosecurity vision for the UK for the next five years. Building upon work achieved under the existing strategy published in 2014, the Strategy aims to deliver a step change in our plant health protections, actions and behaviours.

Public vigilance is a key part of the fight against tree disease. You can look out for any unusual symptoms – like leaf discolouration or ‘bleeding’ lesions – on trees and report any sightings via [TreeAlert, the Forestry Commission’s online tree pest and disease reporting tool](#). The call to report diseases is being made as part of the third annual National Plant Health Week (9-15th May).

Government cracks down on companies for creating “plague of potholes”

- utility companies will face financial penalties more easily for poor quality road works and leaving behind potholes
- move will help drivers save money on tyre and car damages caused by uneven road surfaces
- new measures to help speed-up broadband rollout nationwide and ease congestion

Motorists will benefit from smoother journeys, better connected communities and reduced congestion, as the government introduces new measures to penalise companies responsible for leaving potholes on the country’s roads after carrying out street works.

It is expected the new law change could prevent thousands of potholes being left behind by utility companies nationwide and will ensure more roads are resurfaced to a high standard. This will spare motorists from damage to car tyres or suspensions caused by driving over potholes, helping them save money on expensive repairs.

A new performance-based inspections regime will be introduced, where the worst performing utility companies whose road works fail to meet strict standards will face financial penalties. These companies will go on to be inspected more regularly by local authorities to ensure their work meets rigorous criteria and they leave roads in a good condition.

While the majority of companies carry out street works to a high standard and pass inspections, utility companies are on average failing 9% of the inspections that are carried out, and the worst performing utility company is failing a significant 63% of its inspections.

The new regime supports the government’s commitment to improving transport

and infrastructure at a local level, ensuring people across the country can more easily access local work, education and opportunities while reducing car maintenance costs.

Plans unveiled today will also help telecoms operators rollout broadband nationwide and ease congestion by mandating live updates on roadworks are improved.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The plague of potholes is the menace of our roads. That's why I'm ensuring companies who create them and leave roads in a poor state can be held to account more easily – protecting drivers from unfair repair costs.

We've already invested billions of pounds into roads maintenance, helping local authorities keep their highways well maintained and I'll continue working to make sure all road-users around the country can enjoy the safe, world-class infrastructure they deserve.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

I'm sure all drivers have felt frustrated by the potholes we see on some of our roads, which can damage our vehicles and make journeys a misery. That's why we're changing the law to ensure companies won't be able to get away with poor quality road works for much longer.

The changes we're bringing in will also help to keep motorists updated with live traffic updates – easing congestion. This is a clear victory for motorists and all road users who will be able to enjoy smoother, safer journeys.

RAC Head of Roads Policy, Nicholas Lyes, said:

While roadworks are frustrating at the best of times, it's even worse when utility companies leave roads in a sub-standard state when the temporary traffic lights are finally removed.

Poorly carried out reinstatement work very often leads to road surfaces breaking down, unnecessarily causing potholes much to the annoyance of drivers.

Introducing a performance-based inspections scheme should force utilities companies to raise their game and should ultimately lead to smoother and safer journeys for all road users.

The move follows the government investing more than £5 billion over 2020 to 2025 into highways maintenance, including the Potholes Fund announced at [Budget 2020](#). This funding settlement allows local authorities to plan effectively for managing their roads and is enough to fill millions of potholes a year, repair dozens of bridges, and resurface roads up and down the country.

The measures will also help to ease congestion on roads up and down the country. Companies will now be required to provide local authorities and the Department for Transport's [street manager service](#) with more up to date and accurate data on live road works.

Companies will be asked to provide information about when works start and stop at weekends and all local authorities must send start/stop information about their works. This will update sat navs and other apps so motorists are aware of where road works are happening and can avoid those areas – preventing traffic from building up.

Plans will also help speed up broadband rollout across the country, through exemptions to restrictions on works for new customer connections. One third of all road works are carried out by telecoms operators. The government will allow exemptions to restrictions which prevent or slow down these companies applying to carry out necessary works.

[Operational Honours and Awards List](#) [May 2022](#)

News story

The latest Operational Honours and Awards List recognises the bravery, commitment and commendable service of Armed Forces personnel.



The latest Operational Honours and Awards List has been announced recognising the bravery, commitment, and commendable service of Armed Forces personnel.

The recipients have all shown outstanding courage and dedication while on operations.

The full list is below:

Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE)

- Brigadier Daniel BLANCHFORD OBE, Royal Marines
- Air Commodore Simon Robert STRASDIN OBE, Royal Air Force

Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE)

- Lieutenant Colonel David Christopher MIDDLETON, The Parachute Regiment
- Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Rupert Mark ROBINSON, The Light Dragoons
- Wing Commander Thomas Leslie STEVENSON MBE, Royal Air Force

Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

- Major Stephen Geoffrey WHITE, The Parachute Regiment
- Warrant Officer Class 2 Daniel James BRYCELAND, Corps of Royal Engineers
- Warrant Officer Class 2 Thomas Anthony WHITEHEAD, Intelligence Corps

Air Force Cross (AFC)

- Wing Commander Kevin Harry Thomas LATCHMAN, Royal Air Force
- Flight Lieutenant Edward BINDLOSS GIBB, Royal Air Force

Mention in Despatches (MID)

- Private Ahmad FAHIM, The Parachute Regiment
- Corporal Daniel Matthew HOYLAND, The Parachute Regiment

Queen's Commendation for Bravery (QCB)

- Private Lewis Bradley O'CONNOR, The Parachute Regiment
- Chief Petty Officer Jamie Andrew WARD, Royal Navy
- Captain Lucy Elizabeth RUSSELL, The Royal Logistic Corps

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service (QCVS)

- Lieutenant Commander Andrew DENNIS, Royal Navy
- Lieutenant Commander William John DURBIN, Royal Navy
- Corporal Jamie Lee FOUND, The Parachute Regiment
- Lieutenant Colonel William Thomas Hindle HUNT, The Parachute Regiment
- Lieutenant Colonel Chloe O'BRIEN, The Royal Logistic Corps
- Staff Sergeant Andrea PEARSON, The Royal Logistic Corps
- Captain James Nicholas ROBSON, The Parachute Regiment
- Captain Helene Lucie GLEIZES, Intelligence Corps
- Major Hugo Peter HENDERSON, Royal Army Medical Corps

Teacher bonuses and funding for schools to level up education

Pupils in the most disadvantaged schools will benefit from high quality, specialised STEM teaching following a £60 million investment to attract and retain the top teaching talent.

Significant new payments for teachers of STEM subjects in disadvantaged areas, alongside funding for over 1,400 schools to improve the quality of their buildings, form a part of the Government's continued drive to level up education across England. This will help ensure every child receives a world-class education giving them the opportunity to fulfil their potential and secure the jobs needed to support our economy, no matter where they grow up.

Maths, physics, chemistry and computing teachers in their first five years of teaching will be able to claim up to £9,000 over three years in tax-free bonuses from September, if they work in disadvantaged schools.

The Levelling Up Premium, expected to be worth £60 million over the three years, is intended to improve pupil outcomes across the country by helping to retain specialist teachers working in disadvantaged areas. High quality STEM teaching, delivered by teachers specifically trained in these subjects, will also more effectively support pupils who fell behind during the covid pandemic.

The Levelling Up Premium will help raise school standards in the near term, and also boost employment and opportunities for pupils in the future by enabling them to fill skills gaps and secure higher wage jobs, in turn benefitting the broader economy.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

The quality of pupils' education in crucial subjects like maths and science should not be dependent on where they live, and teachers shouldn't feel that they must leave their local area for a better paid job.

Our Levelling Up Premium will help give children and young people the best specialist teaching in maths, physics, chemistry and computing, while supporting jobs in low-income areas, helping to level up education for all and grow the economy.

Teachers working in the 55 local authorities designated as Education Investment Areas (EIA) will be able to claim the maximum bonus of £3,000 per

year, if they also work in one of the 30% most disadvantaged schools in the country, determined by the number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium.

This builds on the Schools White Paper, which sets a blueprint to radically raise education standards across the country and places a significant emphasis on supporting teachers through training and salary investment, to make sure that every child can be taught by an excellent teacher.

The Levelling Up Premium is also the latest step towards delivering the government's numeracy ambitions set out in the Schools White Paper. Strengthening the maths teaching in the most deprived schools will support schools in achieving the ambition for the average GCSE grade to rise from 4.5 to 5 by 2030.

This comes as £498 million from the government's school Condition Improvement Fund has today been allocated to 1,405 schools and sixth form colleges across the country most in need of improvements to the quality of their buildings. This will help ensure children and young people have access to high quality, modern learning environments no matter where in the country they grow up.

Up to 7,000 teachers across around 4,500 schools in England will benefit from the premium. Teachers will receive scaled bonuses if they work in less disadvantaged schools or outside EIAs.

The Levelling Up Premium comes alongside other milestone policies set out in the Schools White Paper to train and support excellent teachers. As part of these, the government aims to provide 500,000 teacher training and development opportunities by 2024, including two new specialist National Professional Qualifications in literacy and early years leadership, as well as a £30,000 starting salary for teachers to attract and retain the very best talent.

Jenni French, Head of Teacher Supply Programmes, Gatsby Foundation said:

Gatsby's recent research showed that paying salary premiums can have an effect on the number of teachers choosing to remain in the classroom; so the Levelling Up Premium should be seen as a positive move which should increase the numbers of students being taught by specialist teachers in poorer areas.

The Premium follows the Mathematics and Physics Teacher Retention Payments scheme piloted in the academic years 2019/2020 and 2020/21.

It will be offered alongside the legacy Early Career Payments that the government is continuing to pay to eligible teachers who started Initial Teacher Training up until academic year 2020/21.

Fund to secure our energy supply and boost cutting-edge nuclear projects opens for business

- £120 million Future Nuclear Enabling Fund opens to support development of new nuclear energy projects, stimulate competition in the industry and unlocking investment across the UK
- businesses can register their interest for funding, with grant awards expected to start later this year
- Simon Bowen appointed as Industry Adviser to lead the set-up of the new Great British Nuclear body, charged with helping nuclear projects through the development process

A £120 million government fund designed to unlock and accelerate new nuclear technologies while encouraging new players into the market opens today (13 May).

The Future Nuclear Enabling Fund will help to realise the government's ambition to approve 8 new reactors by 2030, as committed to in the British Energy Security Strategy in April.

It will provide targeted, competitively-allocated government grants which will help nuclear construction projects, including small modular reactors, to attract the private investment they need to help make them a reality.

Nuclear power is a key part of the UK's energy mix, helping to reduce dependence on global gas markets, boosting UK energy independence, protecting consumers from high energy bills and stimulating investment in nuclear as a clean energy technology of the future.

Launching the Fund from Wylfa nuclear power station in Anglesey, Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Our new £120 million fund will push forward our plan to deploy a new fleet of nuclear power stations as part of a British nuclear renaissance.

By encouraging new companies to come forward and build in Britain, we can spur greater competition in the market to cut development costs so consumers benefit in the long-term.

Nuclear is central to our long-term plan bolster the UK's energy security with cheaper, cleaner, home-grown power, while creating thousands of high-skilled jobs across our country.

Energy Minister Greg Hands said:

This government is backing nuclear power as a critical part of our British Energy Security Strategy.

This Fund will accelerate the development of new nuclear – from SMRs to larger-projects – and bring fresh innovation into the market.

The Future Nuclear Enabling Fund is expected to support industry investment in nuclear, offer opportunities to projects in every region of the UK and create high-skilled jobs, as well as boosting the resilience and capability of UK nuclear supply chains.

The government is today asking interested parties to register their interest in bidding for funding and inviting further information on potential future projects. It is also inviting nuclear stakeholders who are not planning on bidding for the Fund to provide information from their experience that will help to mature fund design ahead of opening the bid window in summer 2022.

All awards from the Future Nuclear Enabling Fund will be subject to robust eligibility and evaluation criteria and value for money assessments.

The government has also today appointed Simon Bowen as the Industry Adviser to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) tasked with leading and helping to drive forward government proposals for a new Great British Nuclear vehicle.

This new body, announced last month in the British Energy Security Strategy, will be charged with helping nuclear projects through the development process and realising the government's ambition of generating up to 24GW of nuclear-sourced energy by 2050.

Simon will bring substantial knowledge of both nuclear energy and the wider energy supply market as the government develops plans for Great British Nuclear. Simon will report jointly to the BEIS Secretary of State and the Prime Minister and will develop the plan for the set-up of GBN.

Through the Great British Nuclear body, the government expects to initiate the selection process in 2023 for further UK projects, with the intention that government will enter negotiations with the most credible projects to enable a potential government award of support as soon as possible, including but not limited to the Wylfa site.

Notes to editors

- Interested businesses are invited to express interest and contribute to the RFI
- please be aware that a FNEF award will not be a pre-requisite for future participation in the UK market
- the primary aim of the Future Nuclear Enabling Fund is to provide targeted support to address barriers to entry to the UK market by providing competitively-allocated grant funding to nuclear projects with

credible proposals. In this way, the FNEF will accelerate the commercialisation of different technologies and help companies demonstrate readiness for the UK market

- given the scale of investment required to mature a new nuclear project, the government expects to concentrate the funding on a small number of projects to ensure Future Nuclear Enabling Fund objectives are met
- the government aims to start awarding funding from the Future Nuclear Enabling Fund in the summer of 2022

About Simon Bowen

- Simon Bowen started his career as an engineering officer in the Royal Navy serving on submarines. He has extensive experience in the petrochemicals, civil nuclear and renewable energy sectors
- Simon also played a key role in the development of the Nuclear Sector Deal as part of the government's Industrial Strategy
- Simon has most recently been at Babcock where he was Chief Executive for nuclear. He was responsible for the Cavendish Nuclear business and the defence nuclear portfolio providing naval base services and submarine maintenance at Devonport, Clyde and Rosyth
- he continues as the Chair of Devonport Royal Dockyard and providing support on critical programmes to the Babcock Group Executive Team. Simon recently joined the board of Rolls Royce Submarines as a Non-Executive Director

Government support for nuclear

We will ensure the UK is one of the best places in the world to invest in nuclear:

- increasing our plans for deployment of civil nuclear to up to 24GW by 2050 – 3 times more than now and representing up to 25% of our projected electricity demand
- within this overall ambition, we intend to take one project to FID this Parliament and 2 projects to FID in the next Parliament, including Small Modular Reactors, subject to value for money and relevant approvals. This is not a cap on ambition, but a challenge to the industry to come forward and compete for projects and aim to come online this decade
- depending on the pipeline of projects, these ambitions could see our nuclear sector progressing up to 8 more reactors across the next series of projects, so we improve our track record to deliver the equivalent of 1 reactor a year, rather than 1 a decade
- this will all sit alongside our existing investment of over £2 billion this Parliament in new nuclear, including £100 million to support the development of Sizewell C, and £210 million to bring through small modular reactors

We will radically change how we deliver new nuclear projects:

- launching the £120 million Future Nuclear Enabling Fund, first announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review

- setting up the Great British Nuclear Vehicle this year, tasked with helping projects through every stage of the development process and developing a resilient pipeline of new builds. We will work with industry to scope the functions of this entity starting straightaway – building on UK industrial strengths and expertise
- backing Great British Nuclear with funding to support projects to get investment ready and through the construction phase. We expect to initiate the selection process in 2023 for further UK projects, with the intention that government will enter negotiations with the most credible projects to enable a potential government award of support as soon as possible, including (but not limited to) the Wylfa site. As part of this, the government will consider the role UK government financing can play in supporting new projects. Final contracts and construction would commence when any outstanding conditions are satisfied and projects are sufficiently mature. Any projects would be subject to a value for money assessment, all relevant approvals and future spending reviews
- the UK has 8 designated nuclear sites: Hinkley, Sizewell, Heysham, Hartlepool, Bradwell, Wylfa, Oldbury and Moorside. To facilitate our ambitious deployment plans we will also develop an overall siting strategy for the long term
- without impacting the robust safety, security and environmental protections offered by UK regulatory regime, government will work with the regulators to understand the potential for any streamlining or removing of duplication from the consenting and licensing of new nuclear power stations, including possibly new harmonisation on international regulation
- we will also collaborate with other countries to accelerate work on advanced nuclear technologies, including both small modular reactors and advanced modular reactors (AMRs)