

Press release: Government and utility companies announce package of support for Grenfell victims

- suppliers agree to write off outstanding utility bills for victims of the fire
- support comes on top of £5 million fund to pay for emergency supplies, food, clothes and other costs

The government today (Thursday 22 June) welcomed utility companies' announcement of a package of support for victims of the Grenfell Tower fire.

The announcement includes commitments agreed with businesses in the energy and water sectors and comes on top of the £5 million fund previously announced by the Prime Minister to pay for emergency supplies, food, clothes and other costs.

Power companies supplying energy to Grenfell Tower residents have agreed to provide all those affected by the tragedy with reassurance and support. This includes agreeing to:

- write off any outstanding debts for energy bills for people who lived in Grenfell Tower, while preserving prepayment and credit balances
- not charging people for energy for the period after the fire
- not put former residents who have been resettled on a more expensive tariff; and
- put on hold any direct debit payments for Grenfell Tower residents

Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark said:

Businesses should play an active role in society and I am pleased that all the energy companies supplying Grenfell Tower have come together and agreed to a set of principles in support of families who have already lost so much.

Thames Water has confirmed that all accounts held by residents of Grenfell Tower have been frozen. For people who lived in Grenfell Tower, Thames Water:

- has already written off any outstanding debts; and
- will refund accounts where charges have been paid in advance once details of account holders are known

For those who have been evacuated from neighbouring properties, Thames Water will waive charges so those people will not be charged for a service they have not received.

Recognising the importance of making sure those affected are able to remain

in contact with family and friends, telecommunications companies have been providing assistance to those affected in a number of ways including:

- providing free chargers, handsets and pre-loaded SIM cards (main operators have provided the contact centre with advice on how to access these or have made specific alternative arrangements which the contact centre is aware of)
 - allowing those affected to use in-store web browsing and mobile charging facilities in the immediate area
 - working to identify customers (including those without ID) and to assist with accounts (freezing charges, providing credit etc) for those affected; and
 - working to reconnect broadband customers quickly as they are rehoused.
- Utilita
 - E.ON
 - SSE
 - Ovo
 - Utility Warehouse
 - Flow Energy
 - Ecotricity
 - Npower
 - British Gas
 - Robin Hood
 - Edf Energy

[News story: Get inspired by UK female innovators](#)

Innovate UK's infocus women in innovation exhibition will be at the [Getty Gallery](#), London, from 18 to 28 July. Featuring profiles of female entrepreneurs, the exhibit will redefine what we see, feel and believe about innovation. Admission is free.

Inspiring the next generation

The exhibition aims to break down the barriers to women in innovation and present the next generation of female entrepreneurs with inspiring, relevant role models.

This follows research that:

- one in 3 female innovators believe their gender has negatively impacted their career
- the proportion of UK women engaged in entrepreneurial activity is around half the level of men

- if we can increase participation to the same level, women-led SMEs could contribute a £180 billion boost to the UK economy by 2025

During the exhibition there will be a workshop for 14 to 18-year-olds to meet and learn from female business leaders who are changing the world with their innovations. This is designed to get young women excited about innovation and empower them to come up with their own solutions.

Profiling the winners and finalists of women in innovation

Photos on display include winners and finalists of the women in innovation funding competition, who continue to receive support from Innovate UK, as well as ambassadors of the awards. Acclaimed photographer [Amelia Troubridge](#) took the images.

The women are drawn from a diverse background. They are pioneering new technologies and solutions across a wide range of industries, from the optimisation of cancer treatment, to the creation of sustainable alternatives to animal products, air-pollution and waste. The exhibition celebrates their differences and successes.

This activity is part of our infocus initiative to encourage diversity and challenge the disproportionately low numbers of women entrepreneurs in the UK.

Showcase leading and growing businesses

Dr. Ruth McKernan CBE, Chief Executive of Innovate UK, said:

Half of the world's population are female. To consider how many of these talented women are held back from participating in entrepreneurial activity is deeply frustrating, particularly as research shows that harnessing the skills of women entrepreneurs could significantly enhance UK economic growth. More so, the participation of women in the innovation ecosystem is crucial to the development of work that will truly change the world.

We know that a key barrier to engaging women in this is the lack of female role models. So what better way to address this balance than to partner with Getty, and the amazing Amelia Troubridge, in order to showcase the women who are already leading and growing incredible businesses across the UK.

It's an exciting opportunity to change what it looks like to be a female innovator in 2017, with the aim to inspire even more brilliant women to come forward with game-changing ideas.

The exhibition will run between 18 and 28 July. Opening hours are Monday to

Friday, 10am to 5:30pm, and Saturday, midday to 5:30pm. [Plan your visit.](#)

Press release: 8,000 young fish released into the River Rother

The Environment Agency has today released 8,000 young grayling into the River Rother at Chesterfield to help fish populations recover from historical pollution.

This release is part of a five-year restocking programme that is helping to restore the river's ecology to how it was before the industrial revolution.

The baby fish were reared at the Environment Agency's fish farm near Calverton using funding from rod licence sales.

Dr Jerome Masters, fisheries officer at the Environment Agency, said:

The River Rother was once one of the most polluted rivers in Europe. Grayling were wiped out as a result, and weirs in the river makes their natural recolonisation highly unlikely.

But life is returning to the River Rother. Water quality has improved, and the re-stocking programme will see grayling returning to live alongside species such as brown trout, chub and roach which are already resident in Chesterfield's rivers.

Anyone who wants to help improve Chesterfield's rivers and the health of fish stocks could contribute by getting involved with the Wild Trout Trust's 'Trout in the Town' scheme.

Paul Gaskell, at the Wild Trout Trust, said:

We have a programme to help urban communities engage with and care for their local streams and rivers, called 'Trout in the Town'. In addition to caring generally for the river, groups often carry out invertebrate monitoring, and habitat improvement work. We can help out with training for that habitat improvement work and provide support with fundraising.

Anyone who is interested in becoming a founder member of a Chesterfield Trout in the Town group are invited to contact Dr Jerome Masters at

jerome.masters@environment-agency.gov.uk.

More information on Trout in the Town projects can be found at www.wildtrout.org/content/trout-town and www.wildtrout.org/tint.

Press release: Fish kill costs Frome farmer Michael Aylesbury more than £22,000

A farmer was told to pay more than £22,000 for polluting a river in Frome, Somerset, killing nearly 2,000 fish.

Dairy farmer Michael Aylesbury, a director in Cross Keys Farm Ltd, pleaded guilty to causing an unpermitted water discharge which turned the river in Frome brown and smelly in May 2016, killing 1,700 fish, probably many more.

The pollution came from a slurry lagoon at Bollow Farm, Silver Lane, East Woodlands where it was overflowing into a ditch from an underground chamber that had not been fully sealed off. Making matters worse, a spillage from a slurry pumping operation days before also entered the same ditch, meant only to carry rainwater.

The reduced water quality and the river's polluted appearance hit local groups, like anglers, kayakers and swimmers, who had to suspend activities. Residents were also upset by the sight of distressed and dying fish.

The Environment Agency was alerted to the incident on 12 May 2016 and attempted to save the fish population by spraying hydrogen peroxide to restore dissolved oxygen levels in the water. The pollution was traced back to Bollow Farm the next day.

To save the fish, hydrogen peroxide was sprayed to restore the dissolved oxygen levels

Tasked with protecting water, land and biodiversity, the Environment Agency classified the incident as category one – the worst kind – which affected the watercourse for more than 6km and was obvious to the naked eye. The defendant told investigating officers “he had nothing to hide and held his hands up to the pollution incident” and that he was sorry it had happened.

Bath Magistrates' Court found Aylesbury to be negligent for not informing the Environment Agency about the initial spillage and fined him £3,000, a victim surcharge of £170 and ordered him to pay costs of £19,306.69 on 5 June 2017.

Environment officer Andy Grant said:

Our role as a regulator is to protect people and the environment and support sustainable growth. We work with business owners to create better places but when avoidable incidents like this happen, we take action.

Informing us of the initial spillage and keeping an eye on nearby watercourses are two simple actions the farmer could have taken which would have sped up our investigation and stopped the cause of the pollution sooner.

Last November we restocked 5,500 fish including chub, roach and bream at two locations in Frome and we continue working with our partners including the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust, Frome Town Council, farmers and landowners to identify opportunities to enhance and protect the River Frome.

[News story: £260M job-sustaining contract for advanced identification system](#)

The system, called Mode-5 and developed for the MOD by UK-based company Leonardo, uses advanced cryptographic techniques and world-leading electronic technology to allow UK land, sea and air units to quickly identify friendly forces and operate safely alongside NATO allies across any battlefield.

Mode-5 IFF has been designed to give UK units a clear and secure view of potential threats and targets, providing a powerful cyber shield against jamming and interference intended to reduce vital situational awareness.

The contract will allow Leonardo to install the system in more than 350 units ranging from Royal Air Force's Sentry aircraft to the Royal Navy's Type 45 anti-air destroyers and the British Army's High Velocity Missile (HVM) multiple launcher system.

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin said:

This £260 million contract for battle-winning technology builds on decades of operational experience to keep UK pilots, soldiers and sailors safe on operations.

It is yet another example of the jobs and skills-sustaining impact of the Government's £178 billion equipment plan to supply the UK's armed forces with the best possible kit.

Less-advanced IFF systems have been used by nations all over the world since the 1940s. Mode-5 uses the same basic 'call-and-response' method as earlier systems, but significantly improves on them. Crucially, the system can easily interface with allied forces, reducing the risk of 'friendly fire' incidents between UK units and the units of other allies.

Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) Chief Executive Officer Tony Douglas said:

Advances in digital and cyber warfare mean that it's never been more important for UK military forces to have the kind of confidence in their situational awareness that Mode-5 IFF instils.

The installation of this world-leading system will continue to give our fighting men and women a decisive edge on operations.

The new contract will cover the installation of Mode-5 on pieces of equipment that are in service already with the UK. New platforms coming into service in the future, including the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers, F-35 Lightning II combat aircraft and the new Apache AH64E Helicopters are being fitted with Mode-5 under separate contracts over the course of their construction.