

News story: PHE annual conference 2019: bookings open

The PHE annual conference brings together over 1,500 participants from a wide range of organisations to learn and share knowledge and experience to help improve public health.

This year's conference focuses on some of the areas where PHE can make the greatest improvements in health and reduce health inequalities:

- promoting a smokefree generation
- giving children the best start in life
- tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR)
- supporting place-based health
- producing world-class science

Initial information about the sessions and expert speakers is now available on the [conference website](#) (including some organised by Faculty of Public Health).

We are also delighted to have the participation of Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care who will give a keynote address on the second day of the conference.

Interest in the conference is high so booking early is recommended.

Press release: Funding awarded to innovative data projects

Systems to highlight the safest roads for cyclists to use, create a database of all the UK's trees and launch an indoor mapping system backed by government.

Press release: Funding awarded to innovative data projects

- Ten innovative schemes from across the UK have won government funding to

look at new ways of using location-based data to help people in their everyday lives

- One project will look at ways to use crowdsourced information to create indoor maps to help people find their way around public buildings, such as universities and hospitals
- Other winners will create a UK database of trees and map the safest routes for cyclists to take through cities

New systems designed to highlight the safest roads for cyclists to use in busy cities, create a database of all the UK's trees, and launch an indoor mapping system to help people find their way around public buildings, could soon be created thanks to a government competition designed to find new ways to use data.

In November, the Minister for Implementation, Oliver Dowden, announced a [£1.5 million competition](#) to help organisations find innovative ways to use crowdsourcing and location-based data.

Among the 10 winners are schemes including:

- COMMUNITREE – a collaborative project to collect data on trees from across the UK to create a publicly accessible database
- RIDE – a London-based project to help cyclists find the safest routes around cities
- PINPOINT – a project to create an indoor mapping system to help people find their way around complex public buildings, such as hospitals and universities.

The Minister for Implementation, Oliver Dowden, said:

We are investing in location-based data technology to improve public services and the way people experience them.

I'm delighted to see such innovative ideas come forward, which will help people in their everyday lives and keep the UK at the forefront of this exciting new technology.

London-based Cartographix is one of the organisations which have been awarded funding through the crowdsourcing competition, which was led by the government's Geospatial Commission in partnership with Innovate UK.

By using existing infrastructure, such as WiFi hotspot locations and smartphone sensors, the programmers at Cartographix hope to create a sat-nav-style system for people to use as they walk around public buildings. Organisations would volunteer to have their buildings included on the system and the maps would be made available through existing phone apps.

Anu Joy from Cartographix said:

The aim of our mapping system is to make life easier for people.

And we would not be able to do this work without the funding we are receiving from the government.

Also receiving funding are projects to highlight mobile phone signal blackspots, help tackle travel problems experienced by disabled people, and boost public understanding of the planning system.

The projects will be worked on by organisations across the UK and see research carried out by University College London, the University of Warwick, the University of Exeter and the Open University.

A full list of all the winners of the competition can be found below.

Notes for editors

What is the Geospatial Commission?

The [Geospatial Commission](#) is an impartial, expert committee within the Cabinet Office, set up in April 2018 and supported by £80 million of funding. The Geospatial Commission is chaired by Sir Andrew Dilnot. Nigel Clifford is the Deputy Chair.

The commission has been set up to drive the use of location-linked data more productively, to unlock up to £11 billion of extra value for the economy every year. The commission is currently developing the UK's national geospatial strategy, that it will publish at the end of this year. It is running a range of projects to inform this work.

About the competition

The aim of the competition is to explore the benefits and challenges of using crowdsourced data, while delivering public benefit through individual projects. It also aims to showcase the importance of geospatial data for improving public services.

The competition asked different organisations to work together to identify innovative new ways for crowdsourced data, to either:

- improve the delivery of public services
- support the third sector
- enhance the quality of open public datasets

As well as delivering this exciting range of initiatives, the Geospatial Commission will use the lessons learned from each programme to help inform the development of the national geospatial strategy.

[Original press release for the 1.5 million competition.](#)

What is crowdsourcing?

Crowdsourcing is [defined by the Oxford English Dictionary](#) as “the practice of

obtaining information or input into a task or project by enlisting the services of a large number of people, either paid or unpaid, typically via the Internet.”

The sources of geospatial data are many and diverse and many services already use the concept of ‘crowdsourcing’ to enhance the depth and currency of the data supporting the service. Examples are ‘WAZE’, OpenStreetMap, Google traffic app, Uber, and Trip Advisor which is based on user feedback to inform other users.

The rise of the smart cities agenda, connected online communities and the growth of smartphones means that crowdsourcing products are part of a growing market which the Geospatial Commission wishes to explore through a competition.

Competition winners

COMMUNITREE

Project partners: Forest Research, Open University, Treework Services Limited
This project will develop the largest and highest quality urban tree map in the world for use by business, government and other research needs.

YOUR.VU.CITY

Project partners: Vu.City, Pipers Projects Limited, University College London
Vu.City will engage the public with the planning process to improve the understanding of the built environment.

Crowd Blackspot Intelligence for 5G Rollout

Project partners: Ranplan Wireless Network Design, University of Warwick
This project will look at crowdsourcing service complaints to help guide 5G rollout for rural and urban areas.

Crowdsourcing for a Digital Geospatial Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Project partners: City Science Corporation Limited, University of Exeter
Relevant databases will be brought together to enable members of the public to take an active role in health outcomes, by crowdsourcing data such as air quality, to enable practitioners to improve targeting of resources and the health of the nation.

Precision INdoor P0sitioning INformation sysTem (PINPOINT)

Project partner: Cartographix LTD
This project will use WiFi networks and smartphone sensors to help better indoor navigation of public buildings.

StreetFocus

Project partners: Cyclestreets, Planit
Communities will be able to automatically identify areas that need improvements to street infrastructure.

Coreo

Project partner: Natural Apptitude
This platform will enable anyone to build and run geospatial citizen science

projects to improve collection, management and maintenance of geospatial data.

Routing Innovation through Data Engineering (RIDE)

Project partner: Beeline

RIDE will develop route optimisation to increase cyclist safety and uptake.

Generating crowdsourcing geospatial data

Project partner: Transreport Limited

This project will undertake research to understand the accessibility issues for transportation and the user experience for a wide range of disabilities, and how the data collected can be used to improve the service.

The Neighbourhood safety index

Project partner: Synced LTD

This will produce the first integrated live score of how safe a neighbourhood is.

Press release: Protect birds when building, says James Brokenshire

Developers must take more care to protect the habitats of wildlife during building work, Communities Secretary James Brokenshire MP warned today (8 April 2019).

Following increasing concern over netting being placed in trees and hedgerows ahead of building work near housing developments, developers have been reminded of their legal obligation to consider the impact of a project on local wildlife and where necessary, take precautionary action to protect their habitats.

In a letter to leading developers, the Communities Secretary emphasised that birds are protected under the Wildlife Countryside Act 1981, and that mitigation plans will need to show how developers will avoid or manage any negative effects on protected species during their work.

During building work, it is common practice for netting to be placed over trees and hedgerows, but this can be used unnecessarily and trap wildlife.

If developers do not follow their obligations, the Secretary of State has not ruled out further action to protect our country's valuable ecological system.

The revised planning rulebook is also already clear that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising the impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

But this government is going further, announcing plans to require developers to deliver biodiversity net gain through the forthcoming Environment Bill. This will mean habitats for wildlife must be left in a measurably better state than they were before any development.

The Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

Whilst building new homes is vital, we must take every care to avoid unnecessary loss of habitats that provide much-needed space for nature, including birds.

Developments should enhance natural environments, not destroy them. Netting trees and hedgerows is only likely to be appropriate where it is genuinely needed to protect birds from harm during development.

I hope developers will take these words on board and play their full role to make sure we can deliver new communities in an environmentally sustainable way.

Martin Harper, the RSPB's director for conservation said:

We cannot keep trying to squeeze nature into smaller and smaller spaces or demand that wildlife fits in with our plans. Across the UK wildlife is vanishing at an alarming rate, and our planning system must play a vital role in not just reversing this decline but helping nature to recover.

Tree and hedge removal should be completed outside of nesting season. However, if there is absolutely no alternative, then netting must be used sparingly in line with the legal duties and responsibilities on developers, including regular checks to ensure wildlife isn't getting trapped, injured or worse.

We are pleased to see the Secretary of State is acknowledging the concerns many people have about the use of netting, and how strongly we all feel about sharing our future neighbourhoods with nature rather than pushing it away.

Andrew Whitaker, planning director at the Home Builders Federation said:

Netting trees aligns with the relevant environmental requirements in instances where it has been agreed with the local authority that a tree has to be replaced. The industry is engaging with the RSPB to consider how we develop requirements that increase protections for wildlife whilst ensuring desperately needed homes are built without delay.

Last year housing developments incorporated around 9 million trees and shrubs making the industry one of the nation's biggest providers of new trees.

As we build the homes the country needs, the industry is committed to supporting and enhancing bio-diversity, proactively protecting wildlife and providing an overall increase in the number of trees

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