

Press release: Highways England helps to solve cuddly conundrum

A driver called Cambridgeshire Police to report 20 swines sauntering on the motorway between Huntingdon and Peterborough just before 7am on Friday 13 July. However the traffic officers were in for a shock when they arrived as found the drivers' description had been a bit of the sty.

Officers Graeme Laws and Ian White could find no trace of the pigs at junction 15, and then when searching a junction further south found out that the reported trotters were in fact a team of teddies as the "pigs" turned out to be cuddly cows which had been blown around by the wind.

Highways England traffic officers are trained to quickly clear many types of motorway disruption, including animals loose on the network. Thankfully the fluffy Friesians were significantly easier to clear up than the real life pigs they were expecting to find.

Some of the cuddly cow toys picked up by the Traffic Officers

Ian, who was one of the traffic officers to respond to the call, said:

We were looking for these pigs, worried about the disruption they could cause if there were live animals on the motorway, so were quite surprised to find the hoof of the matter was that they were actually teddy cows

The wind had been causing them to moove around in the road, making drivers think they were live animals wandering through the traffic. There were a lot of them, and as we were gathering them we kept spotting anudder one which we needed to grab.

Eventually we managed to manoeuvre them off the road so that drivers could continue their journeys uninterrupted.

The officers milked the situation by bringing the cuddly cattle culprits back to their depot at Whittlesford so others could see what had caused the nuisance.

They are now looking to reunite the cows with their owner, or they will look to donate them to a children's charity.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: DASA funded innovation set to make MOD significant aircraft and fleet support savings](#)

The two-stage recurrent neural network is being developed by a company called decisionLab and is being sponsored by Joint Forces Command and funded by the MOD's Defence Innovation Fund through the Defence and Security Accelerator's (DASA) fast track 'Revolutionise the human information relationship for Defence' competition.

Originally developed for the civilian aviation market, this research funding has enabled the product to be redeveloped to be suitable for the military market.

It's hoped it will in time provide an insight into the future, allowing maintenance engineers to view the status of their systems and the predicted health of that system a day, week, or even a fortnight in advance.

Gripped by this opportunity, the Royal Navy has invested £150,000 in the development of this neural network for exploitation on-board a Type 45 destroyer, and pull through onto the Type 26 – if proven successful.

A Royal Navy ship is incredibly complex, and the Type 45's systems can record 10 million data points a day. With such a huge and complex dataset, the type of machine learning offered by the neural network will likely have a significant impact on maintenance schedules and support, improving capability, saving money and delivering efficiency.

At present, decisionLab is training their neural network on 1.8 billion lines of Type 45 Platform Management System data. Each day the system gets smarter and more capable, and under current development plans this system will be installed onboard HMS DIAMOND for a trial in the summer. It will allow the user to validate system assumptions and help contextualise events to further train and improve the model.

Lee Packer, Innovation Programme Manager for the Royal Navy said –

“The Defence and Security Accelerator competitions provide the Royal Navy with a unique opportunity to both engage with a broad spectrum of small to medium sized enterprises whom are often new to the Defence market, and to

grip technological opportunities from disruptive markets and apply them to Defence problems. This rapid development process, with collaboration at its core, will provide battle-winning capabilities to the hands of the user.”

Joe Hemming, Exploitation Lead for DASA said –

“This is a clear demonstration of the cultural shift across all organisations to focus on capability integration and exploitation as well as technology development. This project is a great example of collaboration between DASA, the competition sponsors (Joint Force Command) and the front lines working hard to turn technology into true capability.

The Navy’s commitment to integrate the DecisionLabs project onto existing architecture will help provide an accurate value proposition for future procurement across the maritime capability and possibly beyond.”

The ‘Revolutionise the human information relationship for Defence’ competition was the first competition launched since the start of DASA in December 2016. 34 projects were awarded funding with decisionLab being 1 of 7 to receive phase 1 fast track funding under Challenge 2. In October 2017, DecisionLab was one of two companies to successfully progress to Phase 2 to continue their development of their neural network system.

Press release: International trade minister visits Panama, Costa Rica and the USA

International Trade Minister, George Hollingbery, travels to Panama and Costa Rica this week (Monday 30 July to Wednesday 1 August), where he will look to build on progress made in securing continuity in the UK’s existing trade agreement with the Central American nations. Minister Hollingbery will also announce that the UK government has doubled the support available from [UK Export Finance](#) for UK-Costa Rica trade to up to £1.25 billion.

The minister will then travel to the US states of Georgia and Indiana (Wednesday 1 August to Friday 3 August) where he will build on the UK’s already strong trade and investment relationship, updating businesses on the UK’s plans for an independent trade policy as the 2 countries look ahead to a future free trade agreement.

Central America

While in Panama, the International Trade Minister will meet with the Panamanian Minister of Trade and Investment, Augusto Arosemena, where the 2 will reconfirm their commitment to continuity of the EU-Central America

Association Agreement (EUCAAA). The meeting follows the successful visit of Panamanian President Varela to the UK in May this year, where he expressed his country's firm support for the swift ratification of a continuity agreement.

The minister will also visit the iconic Panama Canal to explore opportunities around the canal's diversification strategy, followed by a discussion with the Minister for Finance, Eyda Varela de Chinchilla and financial services regulators to learn how Panama is advancing its financial services sector.

Going on to Costa Rica, the Minister will meet with Vice-President and Foreign Affairs Minister, Epsy Campbell and Foreign Trade Minister, Dyalá Jiménez to make clear the UK's commitment to continued trade with Costa Rica and to discuss the smooth transition of the EU-CAAA as the UK leaves the EU.

The 2 Central American nations are crucial to the UK's ties with the region. Panama, the fastest growing country in Latin America, had total trade with the UK worth £242 million in 2016. Meanwhile, trade between the UK and Costa Rica was worth £311 million in 2017, a 13% increase on the previous year.

The USA

Minister Hollingbery's visit to the USA follows the recent launch by International Trade Secretary, Liam Fox, of the first [public consultations on a future free trade agreement](#) with the UK's largest single trading partner.

The minister will travel to Atlanta, Georgia and Indianapolis, Indiana where he will update key local businesses and decision makers on the UK's independent trade policy. In Atlanta, these will include Coca-Cola and UPS as well as leading fintech firms, while in Indianapolis key meetings include Rolls-Royce, Congressman André Carson and Governor of Indiana, Eric Holcomb.

At the heart of these meetings will be the UK's unwavering commitment to a mutually beneficial trade agreement with the US post-Brexit, ensuring free and fair trade continues to flow between our 2 nations.

The UK already has a large investment presence in the US. For example, online clothing retailer ASOS plans a brand new e-commerce fulfilment centre in Georgia, a state where the UK is currently the seventh largest trading partner. The UK also supports around 10,000 jobs in Indiana, and is the second largest foreign investor in the state.

Trade between the UK and USA was worth £182.7 billion in Q1 this year, up 4% on the same quarter in 2017. UK exports to the US were up 4.9% to £113 billion in the same year.

On a recent visit to the UK, US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Theresa May made clear their ongoing commitment to a close and prosperous future trading relationship.

International Trade Minister George Hollingbery said:

I'm delighted to be travelling across the US and Central America this week, building on our already strong trade and investment relationship with the US as well as ensuring continuity in our existing agreement with the Central America Association.

Our trade with Panama was worth £242 million in 2016, and with Costa Rica, £311 million last year. Meanwhile, trade with the USA was worth more than £182 billion at the start of this year.

As the UK leaves the EU, we have the perfect opportunity to work more closely with partners across the globe and I look forward to meeting with counterparts in Panama, Costa Rica and the United States to set out what that bright trading future might look like.

Press release: Hen Harrier Breeding Success

This year has proven the most successful Hen Harrier breeding season for a decade in England, with 34 chicks fledged across Lancashire, Cumbria, Northumberland and Derbyshire.

There were 14 nesting attempts of which nine were successful in producing chicks. This year's success can be put down to a variety of factors including: high numbers of voles, a key prey species, good weather and a great partnership effort.

Land managers have also been carrying out diversionary feeding offering supplementary food to the chicks since they have hatched. This technique ensures the best fledging rate and diverts the adult birds' attention from taking the chicks of other vulnerable ground nesting birds.

Unfortunately three nests failed due to predation and two due to a polygamous male struggling to provide two nests at once. Half of the attempts, four of which were successful, were on National Nature Reserves. While all other attempts and successful nests were on land managed for grouse shooting; one of these nests was just off the moorland on a hill farm in-by land.

Andrew Sells, Chairman of Natural England, said:

The increase in hen harrier chicks this year is truly remarkable. These figures are a tribute to all those working hard for the survival of this breath-taking bird and show that responsible management of grouse moors must be part of the solution.

Reviving the fortunes of the hen harrier has been a cause close to my heart and I very much hope that we are now on the right path. But it will take more than one good breeding season to bring about a thriving population so it's important that there is no let-up in the efforts to conserve this magnificent bird.

Staff from Natural England, RSPB, Forestry Commission, the Moorland Association, United Utilities, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, the National Trust, Northumberland National Park and Northumberland Wildlife Trust, individual Estates and their keepers, farmers, and a large number of volunteer raptor enthusiasts have worked in partnership to help ensure the future of these birds.

This partnership has helped liaise with estates, find and monitor nests, fit satellite tags and ensure that resources are available where and when we need them.

Gareth Cunningham, Head of Species Policy, RSPB said:

We welcome this increase in the number of successful nests this year and are proud to have played a direct role in the protection of seven out of the nine nests, through our EU-funded Hen Harrier LIFE project.

Whilst we acknowledge progress, this species' population is still at critically low levels and still vulnerable to illegal killing once birds disperse. We know that our English upland landscapes can support many more breeding pairs, indeed this is an international conservation obligation.

Dr Adam Smith of the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust said:

It is very important that the hen harrier has bred more widely across England this year than it has for many years. We believe this is in large part because the multi-partner Hen Harrier Action Plan is now gaining traction.

That plan's practical approach is helping confidence build in the land management sector that birds of prey can be part of our cherished sporting moorland landscapes.

Amanda Anderson, Director of the Moorland Association said:

We are delighted to see this year a substantial improvement in the

breeding success of hen harriers across upland England with grouse moors playing a key role in delivering enhanced fledging rates.

The Hen Harrier Action Plan has provided a blueprint that should deliver a sustainable and well-dispersed hen harrier population and unlock the predator-prey conflict to the benefit of both species.

A high proportion of this year's chicks have also been fitted with satellite tags, a large number of which have been funded through the RSPB's EU funded LIFE project and Natural England. We will continue to monitor the progress of these birds closely throughout the year.

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