

[Press release: Environment Agency commits to fight against modern slavery](#)

The Environment Agency commits to tackling modern day slavery

[Press release: Dissolving seaweed sauce sachets among innovative schemes to cut down on harmful plastic waste](#)

Dissolving seaweed sauce sachets and technology inspired by a suckerfish to remove plastics from rivers are among 11 innovative projects to win the backing of a £4 million government fund to clean up the environment.

To showcase the ground-breaking research being led by UK scientists and innovators during Green GB Week, the Business Secretary Greg Clark today announced the winners of a competition to develop new products or processes to end the scourge of plastic waste.

Moving to a greener, cleaner economy which helps protect the environment is a key part of the government's modern Industrial Strategy.

Among the winners are Skipping Rocks Lab in London, whose state-of-the-art facility is working on a scheme which could make the sight of single-use condiment sachets on takeaway counters a thing of the past by replacing plastic packaging with seaweed. The material, which has successfully been used as an alternative to the plastic water bottle, biodegrades as fast as a piece of fruit and is cheaper than plastic.

Other successful companies to win government funding include:

- Ichthion: Filters out plastic clogging up the UK's waterways with a boat-mounted vacuum which mimics the way remora fish feed.
- Axion: Recycles plastics like car bumpers and motorcycle helmets, currently sent to landfill, and turns them into plastic pellets for moulding into new products such as bins or cables.
- Polymateria: Makes biodegradable plastic which lets you put packaging straight into the compost with your food waste.

Business and Energy Secretary, Greg Clark, said:

Companies are capitalising on the UK's world leading research base to develop products that tackle the global scourge of plastic waste while grasping the business opportunities found in the green economy.

When you combine Britain's leadership, innovation and determination it is an unbeatable combination – exactly what our Industrial Strategy and Green GB Week are supporting and encouraging.

Professor Duncan Wingham, Executive Chair, Natural Environment Research Council and PRIF lead for UKRI, said:

The Plastics Research Innovation Fund starts bringing the strength of UK Research and Innovation's entire portfolio, from environment to technology to business to behaviour and regulation, to bear on the pressing and very widely recognised problem of plastic waste.

The innovative businesses awarded funding today have stepped up and are bringing their creativity and entrepreneurialism to bear in finding real-world solutions to problem plastics, while at the same time aiming to create cleaner economic growth.

The Industrial Strategy has research and innovation at its heart and as part of this, the Government has committed to boost spending on research and development to 2.4% of GDP by 2027 to ensure the UK takes advantage of the economic opportunities from the move towards a cleaner, greener economy.

The competition is supported by the £20 million Plastics Research and Innovation Fund which aims to build on the UK's global leadership in the fight against waste plastic, ensuring the UK reaps the economic benefits from the transition to a low carbon economy while leaving the environment in a better place for future generations. This announcement builds on the Government's world-leading Clean Growth Strategy which sets out more than £2.5 billion in low carbon innovation.

The announcement of the winners comes during the UK's first ever Green GB Week, calling on governments, businesses and communities to renew their efforts to confront climate change head on while seizing one of the greatest industrial opportunities of our time.

Just last week the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published a report stating that more rapid action is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emission to avoid devastating risks of climate change to health and global prosperity. Government support to tackle plastic waste will help the UK realise the economic benefits of this global move to tackle climate change.

The UK has already taken great strides to tackle plastic pollution with thirteen billion plastic bags taken out of circulation through our 5p carrier bag charge and a ban on microbeads in care products.

[Press release: Dissolving seaweed sauce sachets among innovative schemes to cut down on harmful plastic waste](#)

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[News story: Competition concerns over washroom suppliers' merger](#)

Rentokil, which trades as Initial for washroom services, and Cannon are 2 of

the UK's largest suppliers of washroom services to commercial, industrial and public buildings. These include the supply and fitting of dispensers such as air sanitisers and soap dispensers; replacement of toilet paper; and waste collection from feminine hygiene units and nappy bins.

On 28 June 2018, after finding competition concerns, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) [referred Rentokil Initial's purchase of Cannon Hygiene](#) to a group of independent CMA Panel members for an in-depth Phase 2 investigation.

After considering a wide range of evidence, the CMA has issued its provisional findings. It has found there could be reduced competition in the supply of washroom waste disposal services for customers that require a single provider across the whole or a large part of the UK.

This is because Rentokil and Cannon are 2 of the 3 major suppliers at this level – alongside the largest supplier, PHS. The CMA has found that other suppliers of washrooms services do not compete strongly for the same customers and has seen no evidence that this will change after the merger. The merger would therefore leave a limited number of options for these customers.

It has not identified concerns in relation to the remainder of the companies' services, where it considers there is sufficient competition.

The CMA is now inviting comments on its provisional findings until 5pm on 8 November 2018. It will also seek comments up until 5pm on 1 November 2018 on its remedies notice, which outlines measures the CMA could take if it finally decides that there has been a substantial lessening of competition. This includes the potential sale of the Cannon UK business.

Further details are available on the investigation [case page](#).

[Press release: International summit to crack down on sexual predators in the aid sector](#)

Summit's theme to be "Putting People First" – with the focus on preventing abuse and improving support for victims and survivors

Announcements to include new Interpol pilot in Asia and Africa to stop predators using the aid sector as a cover to harm vulnerable people

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt will call on the global

aid community to take action today, saying “enough is enough”, as the Department for International Development (DFID) and the international aid sector clamps down on sexual predators abusing the most vulnerable people around the world.

Speaking ahead of the International Safeguarding Summit in London today (Thursday 18 October) Ms Mordaunt said:

This is a pivotal moment. The entire international aid community is in one place, as it looks to change for the better the way the aid sector works.

Our message to sexual predators using the sector as a cover for their crimes is ‘Your time is up’.

This summit will consolidate the work we have done to date to tackle exploitation and abuse and we will be announcing concrete practical actions and new law enforcement tools, which will bring about significant changes. We are demanding tough commitments from donors, NGOs and other aid organisations.

We are not complacent. We realise there is much work still to do, but this a moment to say: ‘No more’. We have to give the people that we are here to help the protection that they need.

At the summit Ms Mordaunt will announce that DFID and Interpol are launching a pilot to help stop sexual predators from being able to move between aid organisations without being caught.

In addition, the UK will support NGOs, particularly small organisations, to strengthen their systems and processes via a new platform, which will include access to specialist investigators.

The UK is supporting NGOs to test a new passport for aid workers to prove an individual’s identity, provide background information and vetting status. This will make it easier for employers to gather up to date information on applicants.

DFID will also support the UN Victims’ Rights Advocate to establish a Victims Statement of Rights. This will provide clear, guidance to organisations on how to put victims and survivors first and improve support.

Ms Mordaunt will announce the new Interpol project, named Operation Soteria after the Greek goddess of safety, will include deploying teams of specialists to two regional hubs in Africa and Asia to strengthen criminal record checks and information sharing between all 192 members, including high risk countries, and help ensure a more robust law enforcement response against individuals.

Interpol Secretary General Jürgen Stock said:

A critical part of Interpol's mission is to protect the most vulnerable members of society from the most dangerous.

This is all the more important when sexual predators attempt to exploit the very people – be it men, women or children – they are supposed to be safeguarding from harm.

International donors, who collectively provide over 90 per cent of global official aid, the UN and International Financial Institutions and will make concrete commitments at the summit.

The summit follows an event in March co-hosted by DFID and the Charity Commission where Ms Mordaunt challenged UK-based international development charities, regulatory bodies and independent experts to drive up standards to ensure the aid sector protects the people it serves. As part of this, DFID put in place new, enhanced safeguarding standards for the organisations the department works with. Today's event will focus on the international community.

Notes to editors:

- The pilot will be led by Interpol, ACRO (The Association of Chief Police Officers' Criminal Records Office) and Save the Children who are coordinating NGO's participating in the project.
- This is a five-year project with an initial one-year phase focused on testing the online platform, which will build on existing Interpol systems. This is a £10 million project, in which the UK has taken a leading role. It will commit £2 million, subject to approvals for the inception phase.
- For more information on the previous safeguarding summit in March visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/safeguarding-summit-statements-by-the-international-development-secretary-and-dfids-permanent-secretary>