

[Press release: Cruel electric shock collars for pets to be banned](#)

Cruel electronic training collars which are used for dogs and cats are to be banned under new legislation, the Government has announced today.

Remote controlled electronic training collars (e-collars) have a remote device that triggers an electronic pulse, which can be varied in strength, while others may spray a noxious chemical. As well as being misused to inflict unnecessary harm and suffering, there's also evidence e-collars can re-direct aggression or generate anxiety-based behaviour in pets – making underlying behavioural and health problems worse.

The action follows a public consultation on a proposed ban for all e-collars.

However, after listening closely to the views of pet owners and respondents, the Government will not extend the ban to invisible fencing systems which can keep pets away from roads and potential traffic accidents. These devices are particularly useful for cat owners and animals often respond well to invisible fencing and quickly learn to stay within a boundary without receiving a static pulse.

Secretary of State Michael Gove said:

We are a nation of animal lovers and the use of punitive shock collars cause harm and suffering to our pets.

This ban will improve the welfare of animals and I urge pet owners to instead use positive reward training methods.

The consultation attracted over 7,000 responses. Around 50% of respondents specifically pointed out that they did not want containment fences banned.

A considerable number of responses, whether supportive of a total ban or supportive of invisible fencing, also expressed concern at the number of people who use the hand-held devices incorrectly and without proper training.

For further information please see the Government's [full response](#) to the consultation.

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[Press release: New funds to boost diversity of people working in digital](#)

and tech jobs

- £1 million Digital Skills Innovation Fund will help people from underrepresented groups gain the skills they need to work in digital roles.
- An additional £400,000 will help older and disabled people get life-changing digital skills.

People from underrepresented groups with the potential to become tomorrow's tech stars are set to be given new digital skills as part of a push to improve diversity in the digital economy and address local skills challenges. A new £1 million Digital Skills Innovation Fund is now open for bids from Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Combined Authorities for initiatives which specifically aim to help people take up digital roles.

The funding will be used to help women, disabled people, people from minority backgrounds or those living in lower socioeconomic areas to succeed in digital roles such as data analysts, programmers, cyber security specialists, software developers and marketers.

Research reveals 17 per cent of women make up the tech workforce and are underrepresented in the uptake of digital qualifications. Unemployed adults are five per cent more likely to lack the basic digital skills than the national average.

A new £400,000 Digital Inclusion Fund has also been launched to help older and disabled people acquire digital skills. Innovative projects are expected to include the teaching of basic skills such as booking GP appointments online, using apps to communicate with friends and family, and making the most of search engines.

The fund, which opens in September, will also harness the power of tech to get people online and support the Digital Strategy which sets out Government's ambition to create a world-leading digital economy that works for everyone.

Minister for Digital Margot James said:

It is crucial everyone is able to take advantage of digital technology, whether it is to learn how to use the internet or develop the skills to work in a tech role.

If we want to maintain our position as a world-leading digital economy we need to work with industry, local authorities and the voluntary sector to develop solutions so no-one is left behind.

Local Enterprise Partnership Network chair and Digital Skills Partnership board member, Christine Gaskell, said:

As the rate of technological change and innovation continues, 'tech' is becoming increasingly integrated within every sector and industry. We share the aspiration to ensure that more people have the skills and creativity that will enable them to contribute to, and benefit from, new economic opportunities and deliver more inclusive growth.

There are huge opportunities for regions to benefit and Local Enterprise Partnerships have a vital role to play in helping people and organisations develop the skills they need to realise their potential. Any initiative with the aim to make more people tech savvy and to bring more women and young people into the sector to create new start-ups and unearth the next digital superstars has to be welcomed.

As such, we are working with Government through the Digital Skills Partnership to bring together key partners at national and local level to close the digital skills gap that currently exist.

John Fisher, Chief Executive, Citizens Online said:

We know it's becoming increasingly important that everybody in our society has the skills and confidence to be online; yet disabled people are four times more likely to lack essential digital skills than the general population and 28 per cent of those over 60 are offline.

We're delighted that this fund will test new ways of offering support to these marginalised groups, often with complex needs, to enable people to live better lives with the benefits that being online can offer.

These initiatives will complement Government's existing work to boost digital skills provision across the country. This includes £170,000 Government funding to support the Tech Talent Charter which is a commitment to ensure greater diversity in the tech workforce of the UK and implement recruitment and retention policies that will support women in digital and technology roles.

Our Digital Skills Partnership has seen Government, businesses, charities and voluntary organisations joining forces to deliver over 2.5 million free training opportunities in areas such as basic online skills, cybersecurity and coding.

In addition to this, the Government has established two Local Digital Skills Partnership pilots in Lancashire and the Heart of the South West which brings together businesses, charities, the education sector and public sector organisations to tackle local digital skills challenges to build thriving and inclusive local economies.

Notes to editors

- Contact the DCMS Press Office on 0207 211 2210.
 - The Digital Skills Innovation Fund will open on 27 August and bids need to be received by 28 October 2018. Grants of between £200,000 and £500,000 will be available.
 - It also aims to encourage collaborative working between LEPs, local government, voluntary sector, youth organisations, charities, employers and training providers to address local skills challenges and share good practice.
 - The guidance document and application template is available on the [Digital Skills Partnership GOV.UK page](#)
 - The Digital Inclusion Fund is being managed by Citizens Online and will launch in September 2018. The pilot projects will run up to January 2020.
 - [Citizens Online](#) are digital inclusion experts, who have worked in over 50 communities across the UK since 2000. They help organisations make sure the switch to online doesn't exclude people and are passionate about digital inclusion. Their approach is based on detailed evidence and strong, local partnerships. Further information on the fund can be found [here](#)
 - [Lloyd's Consumer Digital Index 2018](#) reveals older and disabled people are the slowest to adopt basic digital skills and also have the [lowest internet usage](#).
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Press release: Theresa May to lead ambitious three-nation trip to Africa

Theresa May will lead an ambitious trip to Africa this week (24 to 26 August) on her first visit to the continent as Prime Minister.

She'll be the first British Prime Minister to visit Sub-Saharan Africa since 2013, and the first to go to Kenya for over 30 years.

This visit comes at a time of enormous change across Africa with a unique opportunity, as the UK moves towards Brexit, for a truly Global Britain to invest in and work alongside African nations, with mutual benefits.

The Prime Minister's central message will be focused on a renewed partnership between the UK and Africa, which will seek to maximise shared opportunities and tackle common challenges in a continent that is growing at a rapid pace – from the Sahara to South Africa.

She will use a speech on the opening day of the visit in Cape Town to set out how we can build this partnership side by side with Africa, particularly by bringing the transformative power of private sector trade and investment from the UK to a continent that is home to 16% of the world's people but just 3% of FDI and 3% of global goods trade.

As Africa seeks to meet the needs of its growing population the visit will also emphasise that it is in the world's interest to help secure African stability, jobs and growth because conflict, poor work prospects and economic

instability will continue to encourage migration and dangerous journeys to Europe.

Because nations cannot prosper without security, the Prime Minister will also use the visit to announce further support to tackle instability across the region.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Africa stands right on the cusp of playing a transformative role in the global economy, and as longstanding partners this trip is a unique opportunity at a unique time for the UK to set out our ambition to work even closer together.

A more prosperous, growing and trading Africa is in all of our interests and its incredible potential will only be realised through a concerted partnership between governments, global institutions and business.

As we prepare to leave the European Union, now is the time for the UK to deepen and strengthen its global partnerships. This week I am looking forward to discussing how we can do that alongside Africa to help deliver important investment and jobs as well as continue to work together to maintain stability and security.

I am proud to be leading this ambitious trip to Africa and to become the first UK Prime Minister in over 30 years to visit Kenya.

The Prime Minister will be joined by a business delegation made up of 29 representatives from UK business – half of which are SMEs – from across all regions of the UK and its devolved administrations. The delegation shows the breadth and depth of British expertise in technology, infrastructure, and financial and professional services.

Delegates include:

- the London Stock Exchange
- Cardiff-based cooling technology firm Sure Chill
- solar tech provider Northumbria Energy from North Tyneside
- London-based start-up Farm.ink who have created a knowledge-sharing mobile platform for farmers
- Northern Irish agri-tech leader Devenish Nutrition
- the world-renowned Scotch Whisky Association and Midlands manufacturing giant JCB

Also travelling are Trade Minister George Hollingbery and Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin. Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will join the visit in South Africa to support the Welsh companies in the business delegation, while the Lord Mayor of London Charles Bowman is also accompanying the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister will begin her trip in Cape Town in South Africa where she'll see President Cyril Ramaphosa and meet young people and business leaders.

While in South Africa the Prime Minister will present the Mendi bell to President Ramaphosa in a ceremony at Cape Town's presidential office the Tuynhuys – over a century after it was lost in a shipwreck.

Over 600 troops, the majority black South Africans, died when the Mendi tragically sank in the English Channel in 1917, on their way to join the Allied forces on the Western Front. It was the worst maritime disaster in South Africa's history, and the Mendi has become a symbol of the country's First World War remembrance.

In Nigeria the Prime Minister will meet President Muhammadu Buhari in Abuja and spend time in Lagos meeting victims of modern slavery – a cause Theresa May has worked passionately to tackle.

In Nairobi she will meet President Uhuru Kenyatta and see British soldiers training troops from Kenya and other African countries in the techniques needed to identify and destroy improvised explosive devices before they go to fight Al-Shabaab in Somalia.

She will also commit to helping support the next generation of energetic, ambitious young Kenyans as they seek to build a more prosperous country in the years ahead.