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Press release: UK launches new research and innovation hub to tackle scourge of plastic in our seas and oceans

- UK's world-leading researchers to collaborate with peers from Canada, India and other Commonwealth countries to tackle this global challenge
- new global hub will bring together scientific and technical expertise to share the latest thinking on creating sustainable alternatives to plastic and stopping plastic entering oceans
- high-profile names Unilever and Waitrose are backing the hub financially
- British Plastics Federation and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation are among the top names that have given their support

The UK, working with other Commonwealth countries, will launch a research and innovation hub for experts to develop solutions to stop plastic waste from entering our oceans and find environmentally-friendly alternatives to plastic.

India, Canada and other Commonwealth nations have already signed up to be part of the new Marine Plastics Research and Innovation Framework – a hub where researchers will be able to connect and collaborate on the latest research and innovations to tackle marine plastics.

The UK will play a leading role in designing and running the Framework, encouraging the world to move towards clean growth through the government's modern [Industrial Strategy](#). An international steering board will oversee the work.

The Prime Minister announced that the [UK would contribute £25 million to the Framework](#) during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London.

So far Unilever has committed £5 million in research and development, while Waitrose has pledged £0.5 million of research.

The British Plastics Federation, which represents more than 500 UK companies, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), RPC Group Plc and engineering giant Mott MacDonald are among those

who have given their support, including access to their facilities, networks and expertise.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry said:

Plastics are not only polluting our waters, they are contributing to climate change and killing sea life.

This Framework will help develop options for alternative uses to prevent plastics from ending up in our seas. It also ensures that the UK is at the forefront of encouraging the world to move towards clean growth, tackling the threat from marine plastic and protecting our oceans for future generations.

Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Sam Gyimah said:

Plastics are clogging our oceans and threatening our sea life to devastating effect.

This hub will bring together the brightest minds in UK science and innovation to solve this problem.

Chief Executive Officer of Unilever Paul Polman said:

It is critical that governments, businesses and others from across the Commonwealth work in partnership to step away from our take-make-dispose model of consumption.

We are delighted to be contributing £5 million worth of research and development to the Framework.

Managing Director of Waitrose Rob Collins said:

With plastic waste one of the great challenges of our time, we strongly support the Commonwealth Summit's plans and targets to tackle this issue.

Notes to editors

1. This Framework will bring together experts, governments and businesses from across the Commonwealth to support knowledge sharing and new research in a broad range of issues – from stopping plastic waste entering the oceans in the first place and fostering a more circular economy, to exploring sustainable ways to clean up our seas and developing environmentally friendly alternatives to plastic.

2. [The Prime Minister speaks at the Commonwealth Joint Forum Plenary: 17 April 2018](#)
 3. Our [Clean Growth Strategy](#), published October 2017, commits government to work towards an ambition for zero avoidable waste by 2050.
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News story: Master and vessel owner fined for fishing in Bass Nursery Area during closed period

William Paul Chapman, master and owner of unlicensed vessels Spirt and Last Minute, was sentenced at Bodmin Magistrates Court on 12 April 2018 in a prosecution brought by the MMO.

The court heard about a joint patrol that was conducted on 15 September 2016 by MMO and Environment Agency (EA) officers around the Camel Estuary in Cornwall, a Bass Nursery Area (BNA) where fishing is prohibited between 1 May and 30 November in any year. The officers observed one vessel fishing within the BNA and two men transferring items to a second vessel.

When that vessel returned to shore officers identified themselves to one of the men, Chapman, who subsequently left the scene. The fish box left behind was found to contain 10 bass, two of which were below the minimum conservation size. Three nets and anchors used in the fishing operation were also found on the vessel.

Chapman pleaded guilty to three offences relating to the catching of the bass and was ordered to pay total of £1,000 fine and £1,000 costs.

A spokesperson for the MMO said:

Bass conservation is very important and this case highlights the benefits of joint patrols between MMO and EA.

In cases like these MMO will always take proportionate and appropriate action, including prosecution, to ensure offenders do not profit from such illegal activity and to protect fish stocks for the wider fishing industry and future generations.

Chris Hitchings, EA Fisheries Enforcement Officer said:

We regularly work with the MMO and pool our resources enabling us to better protect sea fish and migratory fish from illegal capture. We hope that this result will serve as a deterrent to others

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Hello Mr Mackenzie!

A former SRUC graduate who went on to enjoy a successful career in the United States government last week stepped foot in the King's Buildings for the first time in nearly 60 years.