

Press release: UK marine scientists begin work to deliver marine litter action in South Pacific

Marine litter scientists from the UK kick-off work with partners in the South Pacific this week to tackle plastic pollution in the ocean.

Experts from the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), part of the UK government, are working alongside colleagues in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands to identify country specific solutions to problems posed by marine litter, including reducing our reliance on single-use plastics, improvements in waste management, and developing more sustainable life cycles for plastics.

In recent years, the serious issue of marine litter and plastic pollution has been recognised by international governments and organisations, as well as local communities, as a growing threat to the marine environment and people's livelihoods. It will form a key part of the [UK and Vanuatu led Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance \(CCOA\) launched at the April Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting \(CHOGM\)](#) held in London. The alliance unites countries around the Commonwealth in their shared ambition to tackle plastics in the marine environment. To support this, the UK government are funding the Commonwealth Litter Programme (CLiP) to help share expertise and solutions.

The programme will bring together scientists, policy makers and communities around the world to identify actions which can be taken to stop plastic entering the marine environment, remove existing litter from the environment and raise awareness of what individuals and society can do to protect our marine habitats and wildlife.

Scientists from the UK are working with their colleagues across the Vanuatu and Solomon Islands governments, regional organisations, academia and community groups, to develop ideas and actions which support the existing efforts such as the ban on plastic bags, which will enable them to further achieve their ambitions on tackling plastic pollution. The programme will develop best practices and create a network of people, groups and communities across which these solutions and ideas can be shared.

UK Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

It is fantastic to see world-leading UK scientists joining their Commonwealth counterparts and sharing expertise in the international fight to tackle the scourge of plastic in our oceans.

Plastic pollution is a global challenge, which requires global action. I'm proud to say the UK is at the forefront of this challenge and, through our Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance, we

will use the collective power of the Commonwealth to protect our marine environment for future generations.

UK Foreign Office Minister of State for the Commonwealth Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

Islands in the South Pacific know all too well the negative impacts of plastic pollution. By working together, particularly through the Commonwealth, we can make a difference, by better protecting our precious marine environments and the livelihoods they support. The Commonwealth brings together British and international experts to find solutions and I am pleased it is leading the way for the rest of the world with this marine litter programme.

Cefas' principal marine litter scientist, Thomas Maes said,

Cefas is delighted to be collaborating with the government and other organisations in the South Pacific in finding solutions to the issues around marine litter. Cefas has international expertise and experience in marine litter science and policy which we are pleased to share with Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, and further nations, to help address the problem.

The two Pacific island nations are the first to receive support through CLiP.

Hon. Ralph Regenvanu, the Vanuatu Minister of Foreign Affairs, said,

We are happy to support Cefas, through the Commonwealth Litter Programme, to work towards identifying national solutions to the issues of marine litter, so that we can protect Vanuatu's precious natural resources now and for future generations.

Toney Tevi, Head of the Oceans Division under the Vanuatu Ministry of Foreign Affairs added,

We are pleased to work with the programme, which aligns with existing national policy to tackle plastic pollution, because it is focussed specifically on Vanuatu's needs. I am personally thankful that this programme will also build capacity here for continued marine litter monitoring to take place, leaving a legacy ensuring that we continue to look after our natural environment.

Scientists will be in the region until the end of February, working with local colleagues and stakeholders to monitor litter, clean beaches and raise awareness of actions which can be taken.

A national policy workshop in January and a final conference in February for wider South Pacific stakeholders will summarise findings and share potential solutions for the region, also informing the roll out of the wider CLiP programme in other Commonwealth countries.

Beyond February, as the programme expands to other parts of the world, networks will be developed to ensure that any further ideas can be shared back to the South Pacific for consideration.

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Work on the Commonwealth Litter Programme has commenced in the South Pacific. Cefas scientists are working with local partners to take action on marine litter.

Press release: Eighth month of UK wage growth with disabled employment at record high

There are more people in work than ever before, real wages are up for the eighth month in a row and 973,000 more disabled people are in work since 2013.

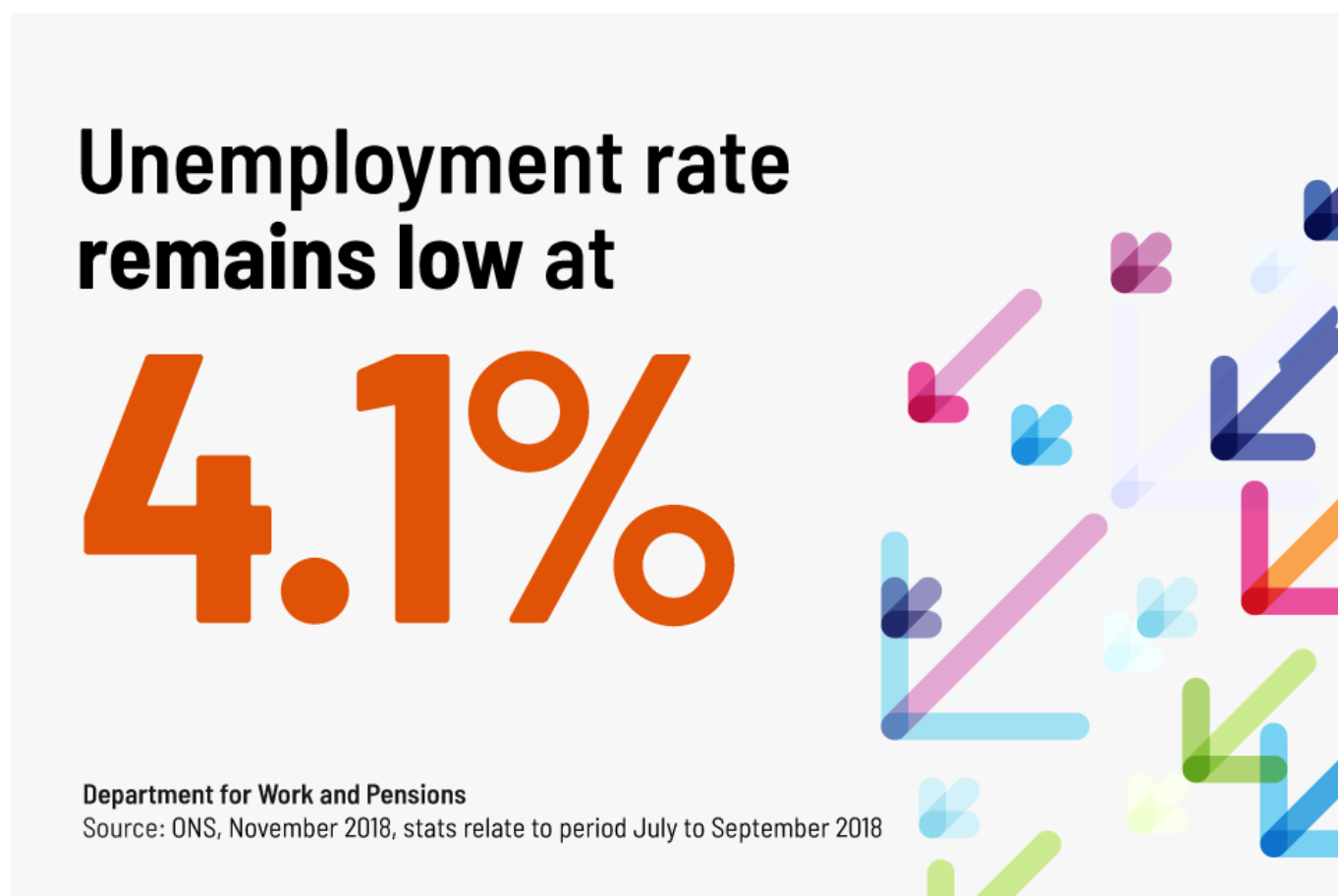
Press release: Eighth month of UK wage growth with disabled employment at record high

As the UK celebrates its first ever 'Purple Tuesday' highlighting the huge

potential of disabled consumers' £249bn spending power, new figures show more than half of disabled people are now in work, outnumbering those who are workless.

In a further boost to the economy and consumer spending, wage growth outpaced inflation for an eighth month in a row, rising 0.9% in real terms (against CPIH inflation). Regular pay before inflation grew at its fastest in almost a decade, 3.2%.

The UK's unemployment rate has also nearly halved since 2010, now at 4.1%.



The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics also revealed the employment rate remains high, at 75.5%, with a record number of people in employment – and over 3.3 million more people in work since 2010.

Work and Pensions Secretary Esther McVey said:

As we celebrate the anniversary of Disability Confident, we can see seismic shifts in opportunities for disabled people, with 973,000 more in work since 2013.

That's empowering hundreds of thousands more disabled people with new career opportunities, and creating a brighter future.

Since 2010, employment has risen and unemployment has fallen in every single region of the UK. And with an average of 1,000 people moving into work each and every day, and three quarters of all new

jobs in permanent, full time and high skilled roles, this shows our welfare reforms are working and delivering for people across the country.

Employment Minister Alok Sharma said:

Once again, the benefits of a strong jobs market are paying off, with the eighth month of real-terms wage growth for UK workers and the highest regular pay growth in almost a decade.

With more people now in work than ever before and unemployment almost halving since 2010, we are delivering an economy that gives people the opportunity of a better future.

And it's worth noting that of the over 3.3 million jobs created in the British economy since 2010, three quarters are permanent, full time and in higher level occupations.

Figures also show three quarters of jobs created since 2010 are full time, permanent roles that are in higher skilled occupations, which typically bring higher earnings – all ambitions of the government's Industrial Strategy which seeks to create better, well-paying jobs fit for the future.

This month also marked the anniversary of the anniversary of the [Disability Confident scheme](#), which helps to transform business attitudes across the country and make our workplaces more inclusive. Over 9,000 businesses have signed up so far.

The government is helping even more people benefit from a well-paid job by:

- backing businesses to create good jobs with our modern Industrial Strategy, while ensuring they play by the rules, so we are closing tax loopholes, strengthening workers' rights, and tightening the rules big businesses must follow
- investing in the infrastructure, training and apprenticeships we need for our future, with public investment at the highest sustained level in 40 years
- introducing Universal Credit which is helping people move into work faster and stay in it longer, while recent Budget measures mean 2.4 million families will keep an extra £630 per year of what they earn
- helping people stay in work longer with our [Fuller Working Lives strategy](#), which supports employers to recruit, re-train and retain older workers
- tackling inequalities in employment highlighted by the [Race Disparity Audit](#), through targeted support in 20 areas around the country and £90 million announced by the Prime Minister to help young people
- arranging work experience sessions for students through Jobcentre Plus, in over 1,400 schools

The work experience scheme is being rolled out across the country, to ensure

young disadvantaged kids aged 12 to 18 get opportunities including work experience to learn about the world of work and consider future career options. So far, the partnership between Jobcentre Plus and local schools has resulted in around 12,000 sessions for pupils, parents and teachers helping to prepare pupils for the world of work.

Read the latest [labour market statistics](#) from the Office for National Statistics.

Contact Press Office

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5106

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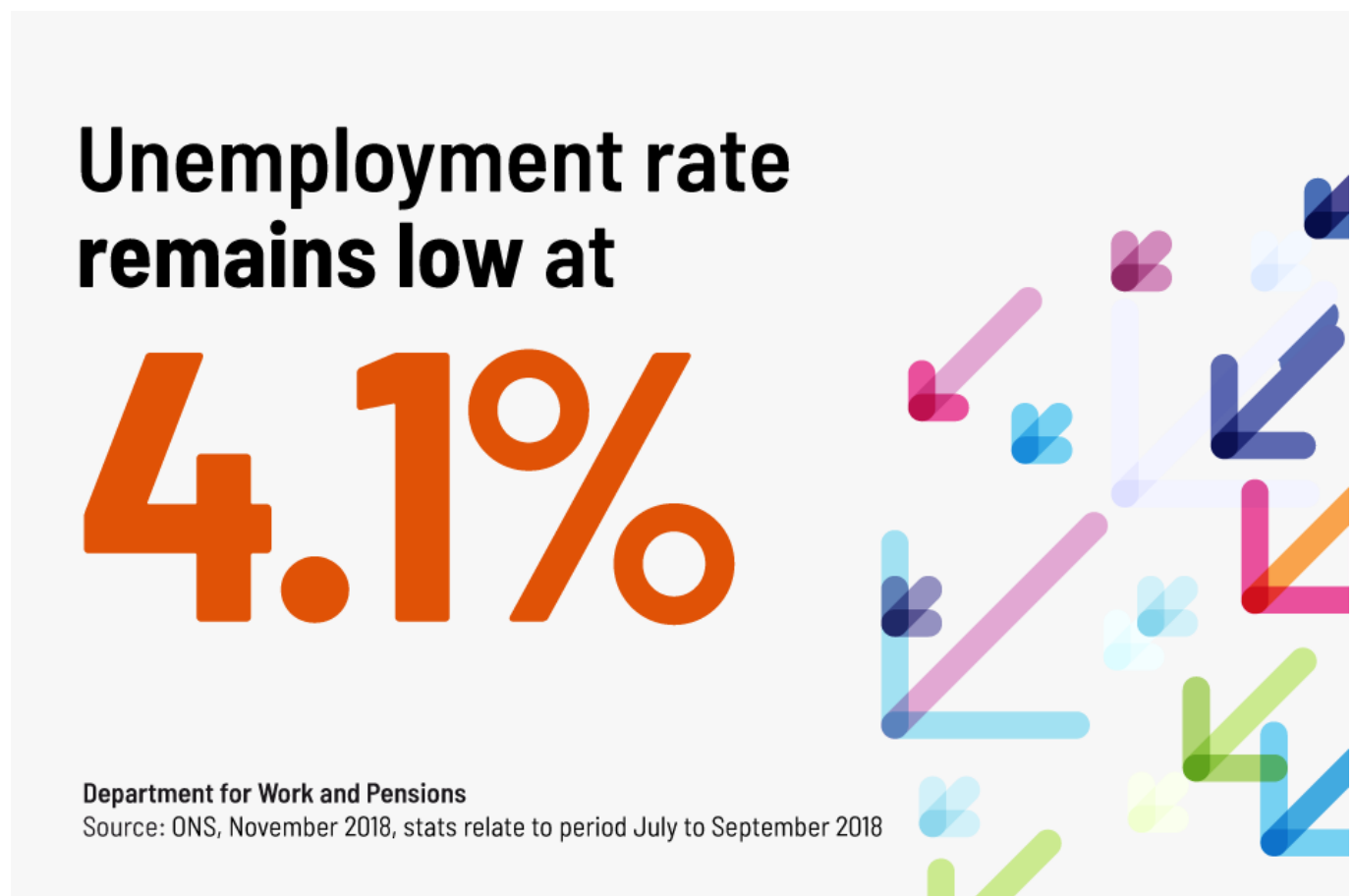
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