

# Great opportunities for UK from oceans

A major report looking at the future of the sea sets out the opportunities available for the UK to capitalise on its existing strengths in research, technology and the diversity of ocean industries.

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## Press release: Great opportunities for UK from oceans

The report [Foresight Future of the Sea](#), published by the Government Office for Science identifies 4 major areas that can deliver opportunities for the UK by exploiting its science and innovation – an improved understanding of the sea, greater co-ordination, a long-term approach to decision making and the increasing global nature of the challenges we face.

Autonomous vessels, robotics and other emerging technologies are creating a new generation of economic activity. They will allow us to observe and map previously unexplored areas of the sea and improve our understanding of the marine environment. The increase in potential from autonomous vehicles means that areas such as data transfer, sensing, communication technology and improved data transfer between autonomous vehicles and satellites, will be of growing importance across the marine economy.

Science, industry and government all have a shared interest in a productive, healthy and well-understood sea. There are many opportunities for closer collaboration to achieve greater marine exploration, protection and economic output.

The marine environment changes over inherently long timescales and emerging industries require a long-term commitment in order to demonstrate success. For these reasons, a long-term approach to decision making is important from both an economic and environmental perspective.

Professor Chris Whitty, Interim Chief Government Scientific Adviser said:

Our Foresight projects have an excellent reputation for tackling big strategic issues, and the Foresight 'Future of the Sea' project report is no different. This report highlights the key challenges and opportunities a changing ocean offers the UK based on extensive scientific evidence gathering.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office minister Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon

said:

Both the opportunities and the challenges set out in this important report are global in scale and demand our urgent attention. The UK is rightly recognised as a world leader in the marine and maritime fields.

We must keep pushing our scientific understanding of the oceans, harness new technologies, and support commercial innovation. Most of all, we must ensure that governments keep pace with this changing environment. International collaboration remains crucial in order to realise the fullest benefits of our marine industries and scientists, for the UK and the world.

Professor Ed Hill, Executive Director of the National Oceanography Centre, said:

I am pleased to welcome the Government Office for Science's Foresight Future of the Sea report. As the report shows, marine science is a real UK strength – we are currently third in the world for the number of marine science publications. However, there is still more work to be done to achieve greater knowledge of the marine environment and the impacts of climate change. This will be critical for making a success of the future that this report anticipates.

The report outlines a number of recommendations to help the UK utilise its current expertise and technological strengths to foster trade links, build marine capacity across the world and collaborate to tackle climate change.

The UK is a global leader in the field of hydrography, the science of surveying and charting bodies of water, with the UK Hydrographic Office having primary charting responsibility for 71 countries around the world. The UK has an opportunity to improve its understanding of the sea by actively contributing to global ocean observations.

Countries around the world are recognising the growing importance of the sea and the need to take a strategic approach to managing marine interests. This report supports a new approach to UK marine and maritime policy which will guide our response to key upcoming decisions and deliver a set of shared principles.

## **Notes to editors**

1. The report can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-the-sea](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-the-sea) after 00.01 on Wednesday 21 March 2018.

2. The Government Office for Science advises the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet to ensure that government policies and decisions are informed by the best scientific evidence and strategic long-term thinking.

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## **Speech: Call for Humanitarian Aid and Government Accountability in DRC**

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you to our briefers for their clear and detailed accounts of why there has been such a rapid increase in humanitarian need in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As Undersecretary General Lowcock reported, the number of people needing aid in the DRC has doubled in the past year. Today 13.1 million people need humanitarian assistance, the same number as in Syria. The United Nations has declared the worst level of humanitarian crisis – “Level 3” – in certain provinces, putting DRC alongside only Yemen, Syria and Iraq. Yet it is often absent from our screens and daily briefings. We must not let it fall down our agenda.

Mr President,

We are particularly concerned about the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable, especially women and girls, the disabled and children. The United Nation’s Joint Human Rights Office reported that there has been a 53% increase in victims of sexual violence in 2017.

Now, the Representative of EFIM gave us a powerful testimony and I’m grateful to her.

Hope, is a woman from Masisi in the east of the country, where 90% of the women have been raped. Four men in military uniforms raped her as she collected firewood for her family. The attack left her pregnant and HIV positive. She has since fled to a temporary camp in Goma and can no longer feed her eight children. They rely on humanitarian aid, like 8 million other Congolese children. 2 million children currently face starvation. Hope is one of 4.5 million internally displaced people in the DRC – the highest number in Africa. Over 2 million people have been displaced in the past year alone, so just in the last year, an equivalent number to the total number of IDPs in South Sudan has been displaced in DRC. There are a further 740,000 refugees from the DRC in neighbouring countries as a result of ongoing hostilities.

Mr President,

International support is vital to address the crisis and the United Kingdom will continue to play a key role. We have committed to spending \$285 million on humanitarian aid between 2017 and 2022. This support will provide over 3 million people with lifesaving support, including food, clean drinking water and essential health care.

To improve the challenging and limited access for humanitarian actors, DRC Government support is crucial. While we welcome the commitments made to facilitate the work of humanitarian organisations and reduce tariffs for humanitarian imports including medicines and food, this Council, and the people of the DRC, need to see concrete and sustained action.

In particular, we urge the Government to take the following three steps:

First, improve the administrative and financial registration procedures required for international NGOs to operate lawfully in-country, through consultations with NGOs themselves.

Second, reduce the bureaucracy for humanitarian workers to get visas and for essential relief items to get through customs.

And finally, ensure security across the country is maintained so that humanitarian organisations have sufficient access to those most in need.

The upcoming donor conference on 13th April is an opportunity for the Government of the Congo to demonstrate the progress they have made against their commitments to facilitate the improvement of the humanitarian situation.

It is also an opportunity for the international community to pledge our support to the people of the DRC and to show them that the World remembers Africa's "forgotten" crisis.

Mr President,

Let me be clear, humanitarian aid will only ever provide temporary relief in this crisis. The key root cause is political instability, which drives the deteriorating security and humanitarian situations. Too often, peaceful protesters are met with violence for speaking out about their political

rights, in violation of their human rights. A number of people have been killed in church-led protests this year which we all must condemn.

Free, fair and transparent elections must be held on 23 December. With an estimated 46 million voters, spread over the world's eleventh largest country, this is no easy task. For the elections to be successful, the right conditions need to be created now.

The international community must remain focussed and united in our support for the people of DRC, and we must remain united in our expectations of its government, and our insistence on accountability and progress. We in the Security Council need to work with the region and sub-region to do so.

Mr President,

Finally, it is with great sadness that we remember the horrific, tragic murders of the UN experts Zaida Catalan and Michael Sharp, killed just over one year ago in the Kasai region of DRC. This Council must continue to push for accountability for their deaths and we call on the Democratic Republic of Congo to ensure that their investigation is thorough and transparent and to ensure that all those responsible are held to account. We should have a full update on the progress of that investigation soon.

Thank you Mr President.

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## **Press release: Grant to support disabled people in the workplace rises by over a third**

Hundreds of disabled employees are to benefit from a £15,000 rise in Access to Work grants to assist them at work, following new measures introduced in Parliament today (20 March 2018).

From April 2018, people will be able to claim up to £57,200 annually to help pay for additional support that they may need in the workplace – approximately £15,000 more than the current cap of £42,100.

Access to Work provides financial support to ensure someone's disability or health condition doesn't hold them back at work, and can cover workplace adaptations, assistive technology, transport and interpreters.

Increasing the amount people can receive annually will ensure that more disabled people, particularly from the deaf community, are able to benefit from the grant and achieve their career aspirations.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Esther McVey, said:

We believe that disabled people should have every opportunity to thrive in the workplace, and the tailored support of Access to Work caters to every individual's unique needs.

By extending this grant we're ensuring that many more disabled people can reach their career potential, which is a key part of our commitment to getting one million more disabled people in work by 2027.

The UK Council on Deafness said:

We are pleased to see that the Department for Work and Pensions has decided to significantly raise the Access to Work cap.

This will help deaf people whose first language is British Sign Language (BSL) to access the communication support so vital to enabling them to thrive and succeed in the workplace.

Access to Work is part of a range of support available to ensure that disabled people can enter, and thrive in, the workplace. This includes supported work experience placements, the government's [Disability Confident scheme](#) and personalised support package. These are all part of the government's ambitious plan to see a million more disabled people in work by 2027.

## More information

Read more about [Access to Work](#)

The new cap will take effect from 1 April 2018.

As we continually seek to improve Access to Work, we will introduce the following measures:

- discretion in exceptional cases of multiple disability, to consider award limits averaged over a longer period – for example, where a customer's ongoing need for a support worker may be below the cap but when coupled with a periodic need for say a wheelchair, would exceed the cap in that year
- introduction of managed personal budgets to enable greater choice and control for customers in the way grants are spent
- taking applications 12 weeks ahead of a job start date rather than the current 6 weeks to allow more time for support to be agreed and put in place
- continuing to invest in our digital improvements such as developing the

facility to submit invoices online

- allowing more flexibility in how people can use Access to Work to support short periods of work experience where there is a likelihood of a paid job in the near future

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