

Press release: Valentine's Day of action against illegal waste activity

Environment Agency enforcement officers, on the 14 February, paid unannounced visits to 14 sites across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Surrey, Hampshire and West Berkshire in a bid to stamp out waste crime and protect the environment from the threat of pollution.

Named Operation Arrow, officers targeted sites suspected of operating in the waste business without the required environmental permits, flouting the law and committing crime.

Waste that ends up at unregulated sites is often stockpiled in vast quantities and for long periods of time. The waste can pose a significant risks to the environment, blighting communities with smoke fumes and causing noise and odour complaints. Illegal waste operators also undermine the work of legitimate waste companies, creating an unfair playing field for business.

Helen Page, Enforcement Team Leader at the Environment Agency said:

We want to make sure the right waste goes to the right place – to protect the environment and local communities. Site visits on our days of action are just one of the ways we are tackling waste crime to help make sure this happens.

We are really pleased with what we achieved. Of the 14 sites visited, 5 were found to be operating illegally. The information we have gathered is helping us target our work at those involved in organised environmental crime and where their activities pose the greatest risk to the environment.

Everyone can do their bit to reduce waste crime by making sure that any waste for disposal is collected by a licensed waste carrier and taken to a properly permitted, legitimate waste site.

To check if someone is registered please visit environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers.

For all media enquiries please phone 0800 141 2743, or email us at southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk

Press release: Information – The King of Modern War!

Stalin was wrong! Artillery is no longer the King of War. Information technology has transformed the modern battlefield at sea, in the air and on land, and it is arguably the new King of War. In April the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) will help to demonstrate this as part of the Royal Navy led Information Warrior exercise.

Information Warrior builds on the impressive success of last year's Unmanned Warrior exercise. It focuses is on how information can be used offensively and defensively to give the UK's armed forces a battle winning advantage.

As part of the Royal Navy's Project X programme, Dstl is working on smaller, more agile and user-friendly secure communications. This will enable new concepts of operations by delivering greater situational awareness. The Royal Marines will put this system to the test during the exercise to ensure that it allows their command to communicate effectively with troops on the ground.

Dstl's Open Architecture Combat System (OACS) is another enabling technology, making it much easier for new applications – developed by a wide range of providers – to be integrated into ships' combat systems. OACS underpinned the success of Unmanned Warrior 16, and will be used during Information Warrior to allow artificial intelligence applications such as STARTLE to be deployed.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a major theme of Information Warrior. One of the first potential applications of AI is STARTLE. This uses AI-based reasoning to help operators analyse air movements to identify potential threats in seconds. Other Dstl projects will apply AI and Big Data to enhance the analysis of imagery from Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to assess potential landing sites and routes to support landing forces.

Cyber resilience is another major theme. Dstl's technical experts are supporting the RN to ensure that its forces are secure and resilient to cyber threats, in accordance with the national cyber security strategy. Consequently, Information Warrior will exercise the Royal Navy's ability to defend itself against cyber threats, as well as conventional threats, ensuring that our cyber defences and skills remain state of the art in this rapidly evolving area.

Better information exploitation (IX) is another priority for Information Warrior. Dstl's support in this area includes the Adaptive Tactical Information eXploitation (ATIX) and Every Platform A Sensor (EPAS) projects. ATIX uses all the available data sources, applying data analytics, machine learning and statistics to improve the commanders' understanding of complex situations. This enables them to make more effective decisions. Currently much of the data gathered by sensors is not used. EPAS will address this by extracting useful information on events, such as ship tracks, from every available source. This builds a comprehensive store of data that can be

analysed in real time, or at a later date.

Discussing Information Warrior, Dstl's Chief Executive, Jonathan Lyle, said:

"Information has transformed the face of conflict. Dstl is excited to be part of the Royal Navy's Information Warrior exercise – in which our scientists will be demonstrating and testing some of the latest innovations in cyber, information systems, Big Data and artificial intelligence research."

Regular updates on the progress of the Information Warrior exercise can be found on the Royal Navy's [website](#).

Press release: Labour Market Statistics

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James Brokenshire has today welcomed the latest Labour Market Statistics, which show continued stability for the Northern Ireland economy.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

I welcome today's Labour Market Statistics which demonstrate continued stability in the Northern Ireland economy. The number of people in work has increased, the unemployment rate is at an eight-year low and the number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits has fallen by 1,000 in January alone – the tenth consecutive monthly decrease.

As the UK leaves the EU and forges a new role in the world, this Government is determined to continue building a stronger economy and a Northern Ireland that works for everyone.

Keith Taylor MEP: European Commission 'final warning' reveals the need for a new UK Clean Air Act

15 February 2017

Keith Taylor MEP: 'The government has been exposed, yet again, as failing in its duty to take even the most basic action to combat an air pollution crisis that needlessly claims the lives of more than 50,000 people in Britain every year.'

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East, has slammed the Government's 'repeated failures' on air pollution as the European Commission issues a '[final warning](#)' to the UK over air quality breaches.

The European Commission has sent a "final warning" to the UK for failing to address repeated breaches of legal air pollution limits in 16 areas including London, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow.

The notice is being served just 24 hours after a [new poll](#) revealed 58% of Britons believe air pollution levels across the UK are damaging to their health while 65% support ClientEarth's campaign for a new Clean Air Act.

Keith, a vocal air quality campaigner and a member of the European Parliament's Environment committee, said:

"The government has been exposed, yet again, as failing in its duty to take even the most basic action to combat an air pollution crisis that needlessly claims the lives of more than [50,000 people in Britain every year](#). It's no surprise that two-thirds of the public want the Prime Minister to do more to combat the toxic air they are forced to breathe."

"The failure highlighted by the European Commission is as much moral as it is legal; Ministers have displayed an extremely concerning attitude of indifference towards their duty to safeguard the health of British citizens."

"That the European Commission is having to hold to account this government for a public health crisis that costs the British public more than [£20bn a year](#) is a shameful indictment of the Conservatives' irresponsible and deadly apathy."

"Theresa May's administration is failing to do the bare minimum, as required by EU laws the UK itself helped to set, to improve the quality of the air we all breathe. The bare minimum. Where embraced and enforced, EU air pollution limits are helping to [prevent thousands of deaths every year](#) and saving [billions of pounds in direct health costs](#). This government readily acknowledges that it is EU law that has been the [driver of positive air quality action](#) in the UK. But the Prime Minister's plans for an extreme

Brexit puts those vital EU safeguards at risk."

"The government must finally face up to its moral and legal responsibility for tackling Britain's air quality crisis. Ministers must now be forced to make a firm commitment to abiding by and fully implementing EU air quality laws. Theresa May must also make a new Clean Air Act a means to maintain and strengthen these vital protections as Britain prepares to leave the EU."

Keith is a co-signatory of a motion which will be presented at the Greens' Spring Conference in Liverpool which calls on the Party to formally back ClientEarth's Clean Air Act proposal.

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News story: NATO must improve agility and spend, Defence Secretary urges

Sir Michael Fallon is pressing NATO members to step up defence spending during a two-day defence ministerial at NATO's HQ in Brussels, following his first meeting with US Defense Secretary James Mattis.

Reflecting the strength of the UK-US Defence relationship, Sir Michael was the first minister Secretary Mattis called after his appointment and their hour-long meeting at NATO's HQ was the first bilateral working session today.

During their recent phone call, shortly after Secretary Mattis' confirmation, both ministers agreed on the need for NATO to be more agile and responsive so it can respond faster to new threats including cyber and terrorism.

In July NATO confirmed that the UK meets the two per cent spending target, which includes a £178bn equipment plan and rising defence spending every year of this parliament.

The Defence Secretary spoke to fellow ministers to call for other states to spend both 2% overall and to spend 20% of that on new equipment to help tackle threats.

In his face-to-face meetings with Secretary Mattis Sir Michael reassured him that the UK stands shoulder to shoulder with the US in calling for NATO to be more agile to meet new threats in the fields of cyber warfare and counter terrorism.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

NATO has been a guarantee of mutual security for more than half a century. Britain is now calling for our partners to step up and share burdens on spending and help it become more agile in dealing with new threats including cyber and terrorism.

As leading player in the Alliance we recognise the importance of backing up our operational and exercise commitments with investment in new equipment to deal with threats to our security.

Sir Michael is discussing the UK's leadership in NATO. The UK's Enhanced Forward Presence deployment to Estonia is gathering momentum, seen this week in a 600-strong exercise in Sennelager in Germany which features British personnel from the Battle Group for 5 RIFLES. Hundreds of British troops including 5 RIFLES personnel from Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire have spent the last week exercising with four Challenger II tanks, Warrior Armoured Fighting Vehicles and Jackals – alongside Estonian, French and Danish troops.

The deployment of 800 British personnel to Estonia under EFP is part of a package of measures that the UK is leading in NATO this year. These include leading the land element of NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force with 3,000 British troops ready to deploy rapidly to threats wherever they arise in the Alliance, and committing RAF Typhoon aircraft to the NATO Southern Air Policing mission to offer reassurance to in the Black Sea region.

Over the two-day ministerial, defence leaders will discuss issues such as protecting NATO's southern border, developing NATO's deterrence and defence posture, and strengthening the transatlantic bond.