

Press release: Blue Belt extended to protect rare seabirds

Nearly 150,000 rare seabirds – including the iconic little tern and black-throated diver – will be better protected as the UK's 'Blue Belt' of marine protected areas extends by over 650 square miles, Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey announced today.

A newly classified marine [Special Protection Area \(SPA\)](#) will come into force along a 24 mile stretch of coast from Falmouth Bay to St Austell Bay in Cornwall. The area – equivalent to almost 55,000 football pitches – is the UK's most important site for the wintering black throated diver. This new protection will help to minimise disturbance to the feeding areas and marine habitats the birds rely on, providing a safe haven where they can spend the winter.

A further marine SPA has been announced in the Irish Sea between the Isle of Man and Anglesey – home to over 12,000 Manx shearwaters – while four other sites have been extended around the UK, ranging from Liverpool Bay in the north-west of England, Poole Harbour on the south coast, and the Outer Thames Estuary near London.

Marine SPAs are sites given special status to protect populations of rare, vulnerable and migratory birds. These latest designations will help to safeguard the feeding grounds of over one quarter of the UK's breeding population of little terns and bring the UK's total number of marine SPAs to 106.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Like the millions of others watching Blue Planet II, I am only too aware of the importance of protecting our precious marine environment, and the wildlife that relies on healthy and productive seas.

The UK is already a world leader in marine conservation, with over 23 per cent of our waters protected, and these new sites will help to strengthen our Blue Belt and give rare seabirds like the little tern a brighter future.

Natural England's Chairman Andrew Sells said:

Extending the Blue Belt gives vital new protection to some of our most precious coastal wildlife. Terns and Manx shearwaters, with their dramatic aerial displays, are a magnificent sight above our seas.

These Special Protection Areas will provide havens for nearly 150,000 birds that breed on our shores in summer or flock there in autumn and winter, helping them to thrive into the future.

The SPAs will afford protection to a range of species, including three species of breeding tern: little tern, Sandwich tern and common tern – all of which are “amber listed” because of factors such as declines in the size or range of their breeding populations. The sites also include the first SPA in the UK for wintering black-throated diver, great northern diver and Eurasian spoonbill, and the first offshore SPA to protect the feeding grounds of Manx shearwater.

The sites form part of the government’s ongoing commitment to create a ‘Blue Belt’ of protected areas around the UK’s coast – with over 23 per cent of UK waters already protected and with more than 300 sites across the UK.

News story: Government backs small businesses in transport sector

Cyclists and commuters are set to benefit from government funding for smaller businesses, as firms across the country celebrate Small Business Saturday today (2 December 2017).

Over 50 small and medium-sized businesses in the transport sector have already received funding to kick-start innovative projects, through the [Transport Technology Research Innovation Grant \(T-TRIG\)](#).

This includes a business helping blind and partially-sighted people navigate towns and cities, and a company that has developed an electronic motor which can be fixed to bikes.

Now firms will have the opportunity to bid for funding through the next round of the T-TRIG scheme, set up to support innovation.

T-TRIG funds early-stage research projects with the aim of helping to create a better transport system. This is one of the ways the government is supporting businesses and entrepreneurs across the UK.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Many pioneering and innovative transport companies are ready to put their ideas into practice and I am pleased that firms will have another opportunity to bid for funding through the T-TRIG programme.

We want to tap into ground-breaking ideas for the benefit of passengers across the country, and I look forward to hearing about the next round of projects.

Some of the businesses funded through the last round of T-TRIG include:

- Wayfindr: a system that helps blind and partially sighted people navigate towns and cities using Bluetooth-enabled beacons and smartphones
- Biella Research: a bike share docking station, allowing cyclists to stack more bikes in the same station to make the most of the space available
- Simply Connect: a platform to manage public transport on demand, using people-carrier-sized vehicles
- DriverNet: an app that prevents delays for delivery vehicles
- Pushme Inc: an electronic motor which can be attached to any conventional bicycle in seconds, leading to faster commuting times

Charles Carey, director at Biella Research, said:

Biella Research is a fast, agile development company, developing a high density stack rack for bicycles. We needed to test a prototype in a real world environment, with real users, and the T-TRIG grant proved invaluable in funding this and justifying further pre-commercial development following a successful outcome.

Ant Chisnall, CEO of DriverNet, said:

DriverNet is a smart logistics app for drivers that reduces delays, damage and emissions during deliveries.

The T-TRIG award enabled us to build our prototype and successfully prove our concept during a trial with Kuehne and Nagel. We used this platform to secure Innovate UK funding to continue our R&D to help us reach the market early in 2018.

Neil Brown, CEO of Simply Connect, said:

Simply Connect was delighted to receive T-TRIG funding from DfT at a critical stage in our development. Without this support, we would not have been able to progress our business: we are now in Scottish Enterprise's 'Growth Pipeline' as a digital business with high-growth potential, and following successful initial trials in Exeter in 2017, will launch a 20 vehicle service in Manchester in spring 2018.

[Business Population Estimates published this week](#) show that the UK has an

extra 196,000 small businesses compared to 2016. This takes the total of small businesses in the UK to 5.7 million.

For more information about government support available to small businesses, contact our [business helplines](#).

Press release: Business contribution to Britain's biggest warships recognised

HMS Queen Elizabeth, the nation's future flagship and the first of Britain's two new 65,000 tonne aircraft carriers, will be formally commissioned into the Royal Navy by Her Majesty the Queen next week (07/12).

But the construction of the 280 metre-long ship would never have been possible without the essential work undertaken by small and medium sized enterprises (SME) from around Britain.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

On behalf of Defence, the government and the whole of the United Kingdom, I would like to thank the hundreds of businesses around the country for the millions of hours they've spent equipping our ships in what has been an immense nationwide enterprise.

Their Herculean efforts showcase our great British talent and saw HMS Queen Elizabeth complete her 2017 sea trials with flying colours as she prepares to project our interests right across the world.

Over 700 British SME's have supported the build of the aircraft carriers in what has been a truly national endeavour. The programme has brought together the best of British industry, with construction involving more than 10,000 people including more than 800 apprentices.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin has recognised the vital contribution that businesses from across the UK have made to the construction of the Royal Navy's largest ever ships.

Chief of Materiel Ships at the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation, Sir Simon Bollom said:

I am incredibly proud of how DE&S and our colleagues across Defence

have worked in collaboration with businesses across the UK to deliver a programme of such global significance.

The success of the Queen Elizabeth class is a testament to the thousands of people who have worked on the programme and the vital skills they bring. I look forward to continuing our important relationship with industry to bring the second ship, HMS Prince of Wales, into service.

In 2015/2016 the Ministry of Defence invested over £18bn with UK industry, supporting more than 120,000 full-time jobs, and benefiting local economies.

Last year saw the MOD's direct spend with SME's increase by over 10% across the country as it continues to make it easier for them to win defence business.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin has launched initiatives such as a new Supplier Portal, which brings together a range of useful information for new and prospective suppliers in one place for the first time, a dedicated Twitter account to flag opportunities to SMEs and simplified contracts for lower-value, less complex procurements.

Soon after the commissioning ceremony on Thursday 7th December, work will continue apace to ready Britain's most advanced military vessel ever for the vital role it will play in projecting Britain's influence around the world.

Next year the new F-35B Lightning II stealth jets, the most advanced warplane in the world, will start flight trials from the ship, and HMS Queen Elizabeth is on track to be fully deployable anywhere in the world by 2021.

Both of the UK's aircraft carriers are being delivered by the Aircraft Carrier Alliance, a unique partnering relationship between industry and the UK Ministry of Defence.

Press release: UK encouraged to 'shop small' this Small Business Saturday

- government ministers out in force to support their local independent businesses this Small Business Saturday (2 December)
- the UK is home to a record 5.7 million small businesses

Government ministers are visiting independent businesses across the UK today in celebration of Small Business Saturday.

The annual campaign, now in its fifth year, champions and supports the UK's small businesses. Last Small Business Saturday, £717 million was spent in

small businesses on the day.

Small Business Minister, Margot James said:

This government is completely behind the UK's 5.7 million small businesses – they are there, day in and day out, at the heart of our local communities.

They are the backbone of our economy, so I encourage everyone to think big by shopping small this Small Business Saturday.

At the start of 2017 there were a record 5.7 million small businesses in the UK – an increase of more than 1.2 million since the start of 2010. The [latest business population estimates](#) show that these businesses are responsible for 48% of private sector employment and contribute £1.4 trillion in turnover.

Since 2010, government support for smaller businesses includes:

- British Business Bank programmes supporting £3.4 billion of finance to over 59,000 smaller businesses
- over 50,000 Start-Up Loans worth more than £348 million
- increasing the amount central government spends with small business – central government contracts above £10,000 are openly advertised on the government's procurement website, [Contracts Finder](#)
- a network of 38 local growth hubs which make it easier for start-ups and existing businesses to access the support they need
- appointing a Small Business Commissioner to champion the interests of small business and help drive a culture change in payment practises

Additional support in the Budget included a 10-year action plan to unlock £20 billion of investment in innovative firms, a £2.3 billion package to reduce business rates bills and further freezes to fuel duty worth £850 million a year.

For more information about government support available to small businesses, please [contact the business helplines](#).

[Press release: UK Government Ministers back Welsh SMEs on Small Business Saturday](#)

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns and UK Government Minister Guto Bebb will visit independent businesses in their constituencies this weekend, in celebration of the annual Small Business Saturday campaign on 2 December.

International Trade Secretary Liam Fox will also visit small businesses in Newport who are making their mark on the local economy.

Now in its fifth year, the campaign encourages consumers to shop in small, local businesses. Last year, consumers spent £717m in small businesses on the Saturday – a 15% increase on 2015.

The UK Government recently unveiled its Industrial Strategy, which includes driving over £20bn of investment in innovative and high potential businesses, including establishing a new £2.5bn Investment Fund incubated in the British Business Bank.

In Wales, the British Business Bank has already guaranteed over 1,251 loans to support small businesses since its inception in 2014, with a cumulative value of £134.8 million. The Start-up Loans Company has also provided 2,086 loans to businesses in Wales, worth in excess of £17.1 million.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

Small Business Saturday is an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the hard work that business owners put in to make their firms a success.

SMEs represent a key part of the Welsh economy and are a crucial support network to our communities. I'm delighted to support my local high street businesses on Small Business Saturday and throughout the year.

The UK Government is determined to make sure Welsh businesses have the tools and support they need to be successful. The Industrial Strategy builds on conversations we have had with businesses and employees right across Wales, facilitating major investments in infrastructure and research and creating growth corridors to foster greater cross-border working.

This is a strategy which plays to our economic strengths and addresses some of the challenges Wales is facing, with the aim of driving productivity and generating prosperity across the country.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, said:

Small businesses are the backbone of the UK economy, and Small Business Saturday provides the perfect opportunity to emphasise how they can grow through exporting.

Through websites like great.gov.uk, and now with the launch of our How to Sell Overseas Guide, my department is committed to helping businesses across Newport and the whole of Wales make the most of global demand for British goods and services, and take advantage of growing markets around the world.

UK Government Minister Guto Bebb said:

I look forward to supporting the business owners and entrepreneurs who provide so much to our communities this weekend. From the corner shops that have all life's essential items, to the innovators who come up with inventive ways to change the world, we have so much to thank small businesses for.

The UK Government recognises the need to support these businesses to ensure economic growth and prosperity, and through the Industrial Strategy we are delivering that support.

I encourage small businesses across Wales to take advantage of the financial backing and informative advice available to them to unleash their potential.

For more information about government support available to small businesses, please visit [finance and support for your business](#).

For more information on the Small Business Saturday campaign visit smallbusinessaturdayuk.com or follow the conversation on social media via #SmallBizSatUK.

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