

News story: New app to report Asian hornet sightings

The nation's smartphones are the latest weapon in the fight to prevent the spread of the Asian hornet, thanks to a new app which has been launched today.

People will be able to use the free app – called Asian Hornet Watch – to quickly and easily report possible sightings of the invasive species and send pictures of suspect insects to experts at the National Bee Unit.

While Asian hornets pose no greater risk to human health than a bee, they are a threat to our native honey bees, which is why it is important to quickly contain them.

By using the eyes and ears of smartphone users, we can more quickly identify any Asian hornet nests in the UK and eradicate them before they have the opportunity to spread.

Biosecurity Minister Lord Gardiner said:

This innovative new app is designed to be easy to use and allows people to report quickly any possible sightings of Asian hornets, which will help us to halt their spread.

This invasive species poses a threat to our native honey bees and we must do all we can to encourage vigilance – this new technology will advance this.

The interactive app, developed by the Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, will also make it easier for people to judge whether an insect may actually be an Asian hornet; with pictures available of other insects that it could be confused with and helpful information about their size, appearance and the times of year they are most likely to be spotted.

If there is a sighting of the Asian hornet, the government's well established protocol for eradicating the species will kick quickly into action: This was the case in Gloucestershire last Autumn, when bee inspectors rapidly tracked down and [destroyed an Asian hornet nest](#), containing any further outbreak.

There are fears the pest could reappear this spring, so members of the public are being urged to report any sightings quickly to again allow inspectors to intervene. Asian hornets can be distinguished from their native counterparts by their abdomens, which are entirely dark except for a single band of yellow – native hornets' abdomens are predominantly yellow.

Martin Smith, Public Affairs Manager at the British Beekeepers' Association,

said:

This new app launched today by Defra is a welcome addition to current reporting methods that have enabled beekeepers and members of the public to report possible sightings. The key to containment is catching outbreaks as early as possible and allowing fast tracking of the insects back to their nest. We will certainly be encouraging all our 25,000 beekeepers to install the app and use it if they see what might be an Asian hornet near their hives.

Asian hornets arrived in France in 2004 and have since spread across large areas of Western Europe. It was discovered for the first time in the British Isles in Jersey and Alderney last summer.

The native European hornet is a valued and important part of our wildlife, and queens and nests of this species should not be destroyed.

Notes to editors

1. The 'Asian Hornet Watch' app is available to download from the [Apple](#) and [Android](#) app stores.
2. The Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat is a joint venture between Defra, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government to tackle the threat of invasive species. More information can be found on their website <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/home/index.cfm>
3. Members of the public can also report sightings by email to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk with a photo or on the Non-native Species Secretariat [website](#).
4. For details on the appearance of an Asian hornet please can be found on [Bee Base guide](#) or the [non-native species identification guide](#).

Speech: "A step-by-step approach to global nuclear disarmament is what we need to build trust and confidence."

Thank you very much Nikki for convening this initiative.

And I want to thank all member states standing here who have expressed concern that the proposal for a nuclear weapons ban treaty would fail to address the key issues that must first be overcome to achieve lasting global nuclear disarmament.

My country, the United Kingdom, is completely committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons and we recognise that we have obligations, as every country does, under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In our case, under all three pillars of that treaty.

And we have a strong record that we are proud of, on nuclear disarmament. We have reduced the size of our nuclear forces by over 50% since the height of the Cold War.

The UK is not attending the negotiations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons because we do not believe that those negotiations will lead to effective progress on global nuclear disarmament. They cannot and will not work.

The British government firmly believes that the best way to achieve the goal of global nuclear disarmament is through gradual multilateral disarmament, negotiated using a step-by-step approach and within existing international frameworks.

A step-by-step approach to global nuclear disarmament is what we need to build trust and confidence. It will provide for tangible steps towards a safer and a more stable world where countries with nuclear weapons feel able to relinquish them.

Finally, I just want to say that a ban on nuclear weapons will not in itself improve the international security environment, or increase trust and transparency between nuclear weapon possessor states and it will also not address the technical and procedural challenges of nuclear disarmament verification. And that is why I am standing with Ambassador Haley today.

News story: Margot James launches Scale-Up Taskforce to identify barriers to small business growth

- Launched as part of the Industrial Strategy, the Scale-Up Taskforce aims to increase the number of businesses expanding their operations
- The focus will be on helping high-growth businesses to reach their full potential both at home and overseas
- The taskforce will look at barriers to small business growth across different regions and sectors

On 21 March, Scale-Up Champion Margot James chaired the first meeting of a taskforce to help assess the barriers to growth facing UK businesses.

The Scale-Up Taskforce, which brings together entrepreneurs, investors and local bodies from across the country, was announced as part of the government's commitment to a modern Industrial Strategy that helps small businesses thrive.

Sahar Hashemi, entrepreneur and founder of leading coffee chain Coffee Republic, will co-chair the regular taskforce meetings alongside Small Business Minister Margot James.

A 'scale-up' is an enterprise that is experiencing significant growth rates in employees and turnover, over a number of years. By examining scale-ups, the taskforce's aim is to increase the number of businesses maximising opportunities available to achieve their full growth potential, which will in turn feed into the government's Industrial Strategy.

Small Business Minister Margot James said:

This government is committed to ensuring the UK remains the best place in the world to start and grow a business. That means identifying and then helping those high-growth businesses to scale-up, go global and invest in their future.

I want to thank all the entrepreneurs and investors for coming along to the first Scale-Up Taskforce armed with ideas and enthusiasm, which I know will play an important role in building a modern Industrial Strategy.

Scale-Up Taskforce Co-Chair and entrepreneur Sahar Hashemi said:

We are already a start-up nation and now the opportunity is to become a scale-up nation – by removing the barriers and creating an ecosystem to enable the entrepreneurs who had the grit and determination to start a business to capitalise on opportunities this new global networked world brings and grow their businesses to scale.

The Scale-Up Taskforce will complement the new Entrepreneurship Review led by Professor Tim Dafforn, which will examine the entrepreneurial journey from starting-up to the point of scale-up, and the Patient Capital Review led by Damon Buffini.

News story: New cash to help vulnerable women turn their backs on crime

Vulnerable women at risk of committing crime are to benefit from tailored, targeted support to break the cycle of reoffending and turn their lives around for good – backed by funding totalling over £800,000, Justice Minister Dr Phillip Lee has today (28 March 2017) announced.

Successful bidders in 6 regions across the country

- Lancashire
- Shropshire
- Norfolk
- Sussex
- Surrey
- Devon

will use the cash boost to increase the support on offer to female offenders both behind bars and in the community. This should improve life chances for vulnerable women and cut crime.

The money will be used to provide a more joined-up and tailored support for local women at risk of crime and in the justice system. It will bring together local agencies and services to provide wraparound care and support to women to turn their backs on crime for good.

Some areas will use the money to help generate better working relationships with counterparts in the NHS, courts and police, making sure that vulnerable women have access to the services they need.

One area which has already benefited from the funding has developed a successful early intervention pilot, identifying female offenders as soon as they come into contact with the police.

Almost half of women released from prison reoffend within a year. Yet many suffer from a range of complex issues including substance misuse, mental health problems and domestic violence. These require specialist support and intervention to improve lives and end the scourge of reoffending which costs the taxpayer £15 billion a year.

Justice Minister Dr Phillip Lee said:

I am delighted to announce this investment in support for female offenders, which will help local areas to support vulnerable women and get them out of the cycle of crime.

Many women who are at risk of offending or reoffending have a range

of complex circumstances. Our funding will help local areas provide the support women need to lead crime free lives, helping to reduce reoffending, cut crime and make our streets safer.

I am absolutely committed to improving support for women as part of our wider reforms and we will set out our strategy to improve outcomes for female offenders later in the year.

The money will be used in these communities to put structures in place to assess and address the needs of these women at an early stage and provide the kind of wraparound support that can make all the difference in diverting them from crime.

The areas will develop their own unique strategies which are best targeted to address the needs of women in their areas, working across local public and third sector organisations.

Today's announcement builds on the wholesale changes taking place across the criminal justice system following on from the publication of the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper in November last year.

This includes giving governors more powers over education, work and health, so they can tailor support to the prisoners in their charge.

News story: Broadband providers drop cancellation fees for Armed Forces personnel

The commitment from the UK's biggest broadband providers representing 95 per cent of Britain's broadband market comes into force immediately, and will benefit tens of thousands of Forces households in the UK and abroad.

The change agreed to under the tenets of the Armed Forces Covenant includes BT, EE, Plusnet, Talk Talk and Virgin Media, who have all committed to treating military personnel fairly when cancelling their contracts.

Up until now, members of the Armed Forces who are deployed overseas or to different parts of the UK not covered by their provider could be forced to pay a cancellation fee. They will no longer have to face this cost and be disadvantaged due to the mobile nature of service life.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster, said:

Our Armed Forces are sent all over the world and across the country

to help keep our country safe and they should never be at a disadvantage because of this. The removal of cancellation fees by leading broadband providers is yet another example of the Covenant in action, which is making sure our brave personnel are treated fairly. It's a welcome move and we're looking forward to seeing what more British businesses can do to support our military.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or have previously served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly and not disadvantaged by their service. Delivery partners include businesses and trade bodies, charities and community organisations, local authorities and government departments.

BT Chief Executive Gavin Patterson, said:

Armed Forces personnel play a vital role protecting our country, whether serving overseas or stationed away from home in other parts of the UK. That's why we're committed to ensuring they don't have to pay for broadband or TV services they can't access, when they find themselves in this situation. Whether it's through today's announcement, our hiring of ex-armed forces personnel, or through our work with Reservists, BT, along with our fellow signatories are proud to support our country's military personnel.

TalkTalk Chief Executive, Dido Harding, added:

We recognise that service personnel and their families face unique challenges, not least due to the fact they are regularly posted to new locations all over the country and abroad, often at short notice. TalkTalk was the first ISP to recognise how tricky this can be and offer free disconnections for service personnel moving overseas, and we're delighted that the rest of the industry has followed suit.

Today's announcement follows previous Covenant pledges by UK businesses to support personnel when they are posted overseas.

Last year, the UK's largest insurers and brokers allowed personnel and their families posted abroad to keep their No Claims Bonus for up to three years, and also waived cancellation fees.

47 of the UK's high street banks and building societies also committed to letting personnel posted overseas and around the UK rent out their homes without facing higher mortgage costs or having to change to a buy-to-let mortgage.