£1.4m delivered to projects supporting sustainable fishing and fisheries science across the UK

Eight innovative new projects that will support the UK's fishing industry to be more productive and sustainable have been awarded a share of £1.4 million, the government has announced today.

The funding is the first part of the £24 million earmarked from the £100 million UK Seafood Fund specifically for science and innovation projects – to invest in new technology, trial new gear and support world-class research.

One of the successful applicants announced today is a project trialling the use of kites and Looming Eye buoys to deter seabirds from diving into the water near to an operational fishery and getting caught up in the nets – an issue which is estimated to kill up to 400,000 seabirds worldwide each year. It's hoped the project will help to protect the UK's vital but threatened seabird populations, such as the Great Northern Divers, Black-throated Divers and Slavonian Grebes.

Another winning project will explore the use of artificial lights to change fish behaviour with a long term goal to look at more selective and sustainable ways of trawling for nephrops and squid, which can currently impact on other marine wildlife.

The £100 million UK Seafood Fund was launched to help level up coastal communities across the UK. Alongside the funding for science and innovation, it also includes a £65 million infrastructure scheme announced in December which will be made available for projects such as modernising ports and harbours, and a further £10 million to encourage new entrants into the processing, catching and aquaculture sectors, alongside training and upskilling current workers.

These schemes will ensure the industry and coastal communities are equipped to benefit from additional quota gained as a result of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) signed with the EU in 2020. Following our departure from the Common Fisheries Policy, there have been uplifts in quota for UK vessels, with the value of UK-EU fishing opportunities for the UK in 2021 totalling approximately £333 million.

Fisheries Minister, Victoria Prentis, said:

> I am pleased to see the £100m UK Seafood Fund in action, backing the impressive wealth of talent and innovation in our fishing industry.
>
> A sustainable fishing industry is essential if we are to ensure we have a healthy, thriving marine environment that is capable of

> supporting our world-class industry long into the future.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Malcolm Offord said:

> It’s pleasing, but unsurprising, to see Scottish expertise at the heart of many of these projects receiving UK Government funding to boost innovation and sustainability in the UK fisheries sector.
>
> Scotland’s seafood, aquaculture and science sectors are world renowned and I look forward to continuing to work closely with them to ensure that this funding – and future allocations – drives the fishing industry to new heights and helps to deliver a sustainable and profitable future.

The funding has been awarded through the Fisheries Industry Science Partnerships (FISP) scheme, established to strengthen relations between industry and research organisations to promote world-class fisheries management. Today’s investment is the first in a series of funding rounds that will see the fishing and seafood industry supported to work with scientists to research more productive and sustainable fishing gear and gather new data to more sustainably manage the UK’s fish stocks. Applications for a second round of funding will open on Wednesday 2 March and run until 25 April.

This comes as the UK and Devolved governments call for views on the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS). The JFS sets out policies for achieving or contributing to the eight objectives outlined in the Fisheries Act 2020 which will help to achieve the UK’s vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive, and biologically diverse oceans and seas. Each of the eight FISP award winners have been chosen for their potential to meet one or multiple Fisheries Act objectives.

A second round of Fisheries Industry Science Partnerships funding opens on 2nd March and will remain open to applications until 25th April 2022.

Funding awarded includes:

- Over £274,000 to improve UK-wide data on catches of crab, lobster and whelks by using autonomous sampling systems on active fishing vessels, or at processing sites. The innovative project will also use image analysis technology to determine quantity, size and sex of shellfish catches to significantly improve our understanding of shellfish stocks and shape long-term sustainable fisheries management. The project will be delivered by Seafish, the Welsh Fishermen’s Association, Western Fish Producers Organisation, Holderness Fishing Industry Group, Heriot Watt University, Bangor University and South Devon and Channel Shell fishermen Ltd.

- Almost £300,000 to support a healthy lobster and crab industry with a programme that will see creel mounted cameras deployed in fisheries in Holderness, Orkney and the Isle of Man. The project will look to develop a more accurate picture of population size. With FISP funding, the project will see the Holderness Fishing Industry Group, Orkney Sustainable Fisheries, Cefas, Heriot Watt University and Bangor University working collaboratively to deliver rigorous stock assessments.

- Almost £16,000 to address bycatch in gillnet fisheries, an issue which has been estimated to be responsible for the death of nearly 400,000 seabirds worldwide each year. The project will be delivered by Fishtek Marine, partnered with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Seafood And Eat It Processing Ltd and SeaScope Fisheries Research Ltd. The organisations will collectively develop a full research proposal that will lead to a systematic programme of bycatch monitoring and evaluation of deterrents designed to protect the UK's vital but threatened seabird populations, such as the Great Northern Divers, Black-throated Divers and Slavonian Grebes.

- Other selected projects include a programme to develop one or more full research proposals that will address the specific challenges facing the Celtic Sea demersal trawl mixed fisheries that will receive £19,000 in funding. A data collection project using bio-collectors to develop a more predictive stock assessment of inshore lobster fisheries has secured over £264,000 and a study of whelk, lobster and crab fisheries to understand wider impacts of fishing activity, including use of static gears, will receive almost £18,000.

- The first round of funding will also invest over £280,000 in a project that will explore the effectiveness of using artificial lights to change fish behaviour. Almost £248,000 will be provided to facilitate a major research project to address key barriers to improved assessment and management of whelk fisheries. The project aims to support sustainable management and assess the effectiveness and economic viability of alternatives to traditional whelk baits.

Further information:

- For a full list and information on the eight project winners, please see here.
- The FISP Network, comprised of three fishing charities, has been set up to support fishers connect with scientists and jointly develop proposals. More information on this can be found here: FISHERIES ANIMATEUR (fishinganimateur.co.uk)
- All FISP projects are delivered in collaboration between the fishing and seafood industry and research organisations.
- (1) The incidental catch of seabirds in gillnet fisheries: A global

review', The incidental catch of seabirds in gillnet fisheries: A global review (fao.org)

GDF report highlights a year of progress

The GDF Annual Report has been published today and outlines progress of the nationwide programme. Among the highlights are the formation of Community Partnerships in Mid Copeland, South Copeland, and Allerdale, Cumbria, and a Working Group in Theddlethorpe, Lincolnshire. These developments provide platforms for early engagement about a GDF.

The report also provides comprehensive information about the potential overall cost for a GDF, ranging from £20-£53 billion depending on a range of factors, such as the specific location, how much and what sort of materials goes into it, and geology. These costs will be spread over the lifetime of the 100-plus year project.

Representing one of the country's largest infrastructure investments, a highly engineered GDF will provide the highest levels of safety, security, and protection for generations, disposing of hazardous UK radioactive waste that has been accumulating for more than 60 years.

Also included is a summary of international progress in countries such as Sweden, Finland, and France, who are developing their own geological disposal programmes.

Karen Wheeler, Nuclear Waste Services Deputy CEO/ Major Capital Programmes Director, said:

> A GDF will be one of the biggest infrastructure programmes in the UK and provide a major investment for the host local community and its economy, as well as being a vital project for the UK.
>
> It is about acting now to deliver for future generations, an essential solution to radioactive waste which will protect our environment, boost our economy, and invest in local communities.
>
> We are now making real progress and having conversations with a number of communities about the potential for them to host a GDF.

The UK search for a suitable site is a nationwide process based on community consent and includes detailed site investigations over a number of years. To learn about GDF and for more information about progress, read the GDF Annual Report.

The SIXEP Continuity Plant success shows future for our project delivery

Each of our infrastructure projects will deliver vital work to create a clean and safe environment for future generations.

That's why getting them up and running is vital. Each may be a multi-million-pound facility with a specific job to do, but they are each also a link in a chain which runs from emptying our legacy facilities through to safely storing that waste for decades to come.

The sooner we can safely get these facilities ready for action, the better. The need to deliver them at pace and under budget is why we've set up a ground-breaking project delivery framework, called Programme and Project Partners.

One of the first of our facilities to be delivered through the partnership is our SIXEP Continuity Project. When finished, this facility will help ensure the continued operation of our Site Ion Exchange Effluent Plant (SIXEP).

SIXEP treats and makes safe the effluent created by risk reduction activities in our First Generation Magnox Storage Pond and Magnox Swarf Storage Silo. Having the SIXEP Continuity Plant will enable us to continue treating this waste for decades to come.

The plant is currently in the construction phase, with building set to finish in 2029.

Already this year we have seen it get final government backing for its plans months ahead of expectations, and more recently the team competed the final concrete pour on its foundation slab weeks ahead of schedule.

Head of the project, Jeremy Hunt explained:

> We finished the final pour on the base slab 2 weeks ahead of our original baseline estimate. This came soon after we received approval from government for the project's full business case.
>
> Getting this approval means our client can place the full contract for delivery of the whole project, right up to completion in 2028.
>
> There are no further government approvals required. It shows that HM Treasury has confidence in our plans and that we will do what we have said we will do.

The project is benefiting from being part of the Programme and Project Partners, and the collaboration the framework brings.

It's gained a lot of learning from fellow projects like the Sellafield Retreatment Plant, which went through the business case process first.

This sharing of information across projects is an essential part of the partners approach.

Jeremy added:

> We also engaged early with Sellafield Ltd's new business case authoring team, part of our own supply chain department. We also produced a video which was held up as best practice to explain how the project will work and what the facility is going to achieve.
>
> It's successes like this that can now be weaved into the approach for future projects.

2022 will continue to be a busy year for the SIXEP Continuity Plant.

The project will be testing the large vessels the facility will use to clean the effluent.

A test rig at Bendalls in Carlisle will pump water through the vessels to ensure they work correctly.

Tyler Richardson from Bendalls, talks us through his role in the video below:

Bendalls

Meanwhile on-site the plant walls will be going up and the contractors who will deliver the miles of stainless-steel pipework and complex electrical instrumentation needed are already on-board. Their early involvement in the project is seen as an important part of the partnership.

Consultation to begin on proposed changes to permit conditions at Walleys Quarry

An application to vary the conditions of the environmental permit (Ref. DP3734DC) was made in July 2020 by the site operator, Walleys Quarry Ltd (formerly named Red Industries RM Ltd), to allow changes to approved landfill operations.

Variations to environmental permits are not unusual during the operational lifespan of a landfill and the specific variations within this permit are standard for such a regulated site. In most cases they are introduced to allow for the implementation of improved operational technologies and techniques, or to add additional conditions to improve regulation.

Applications of this kind do not require public consultation. However, given the level of interest from the neighbouring community, the Environment Agency has decided to carry out a consultation before it reaches its final decision.

The permit variation application proposes two changes. The first relates to the type of material used to cap the landfill as part of the restoration process. The current permit requires the use of a clay layer to seal the site, but the operator has instead requested that a geo-synthetic layer be used. Whilst clay is a widely used and acceptable means of capping, geo-synthetic caps are more effective in controlling landfill gas emissions and offer a better alternative to clay.

The second change involves the introduction of revised limits of methane and carbon dioxide measured at specific boreholes at the perimeter of the site. This will allow the Environment Agency to better identify the levels of methane emitted by Walleys Quarry. The removal of carbon dioxide compliance limits is standard across the landfill sector.

Gas detected at the specified boreholes does not contain hydrogen sulphide, so an amendment to account for these background levels will not increase the risk of odours.

Having carefully considered Walleys Quarry Ltd’s application, the Environment Agency is satisfied that the proposals do not increase the risk to the environment or human health. As a result, it is proposing to accept the operator’s proposals and to vary the current permit conditions to incorporate the requested changes.

Those interested are invited to submit any new relevant information related to the proposed changes before a final decision is made. The consultation begins on 21 February 2022 and will remain open for 20 days.

To access the relevant documentation from Monday 21 February, please visit the consultation website.

The consultation documents can also be viewed from Monday 21 February in the following local libraries:

- Newcastle Library, Castle House, Barracks Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 1BL
- Knutton Library, Church Lane, Knutton, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 6EB
- Silverdale Library, High Street, Silverdale, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 6LY

Anyone wishing to comment on the proposals is invited to read the documentation online or at the local libraries detailed above before responding electronically on the website, by email to

PSCpublicresponse@environment-agency.gov.uk or by post to: PSC – EP Team, Quadrant 2, 99 Parkway Avenue, Sheffield, S9 4WF.

Those unable to make representation via the consultation website, by email, or by post, should contact the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506.

COP26 President visits Viet Nam and Indonesia to progress putting the Glasgow Climate Pact into action

- COP26 President Alok Sharma visited Viet Nam and Indonesia as part of the UK's work to progress commitments made in the Glasgow Climate Pact at COP26
- Mr Sharma met Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and key ministers in Hanoi, welcoming 2050 Viet Nam's net zero commitment
- In Indonesia, Mr Sharma met a range of ministers to discuss how the UK and Indonesia can work together to reinforce climate action during Indonesia's G20 Presidency

COP26 President Alok Sharma travelled to Indonesia and Viet Nam this week to progress and strengthen delivery of the landmark Glasgow Climate Pact.

These visits continue the work of the UK COP Presidency to press for updated climate commitments from all countries ahead of COP27 in Egypt, aligned with the crucial goal of limiting global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees.

In Viet Nam (13-15 February), Mr Sharma met Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Tran Hong Ha – Viet Nam's Chief Negotiator for climate change, and Minister of Industry and Trade Nguyen Hong Dien, and Minister of Planning and Investment Nguyen Chi Dung.

Mr Sharma welcomed the ambitious commitments made by Prime Minister Chinh at COP26, including a 2050 net zero commitment and endorsing the 'Coal to clean power transition' statement. He underlined the UK's determination to work with Viet Nam to achieve its commitments and to put forward a 2030 climate action plan that aligns with the 1.5 degree goal.

The COP President also acknowledged the scale of the task to deliver the public investment needed for Viet Nam to transition to clean energy, and the finance needed to provide dedicated support to Viet Nam to support its ambitious climate commitments. This includes the potential for support through the 'Clean Green Initiative', which aims to help developing countries take advantage of green technology and grow their economies sustainably.

In a meeting with members of civil society, Mr Sharma explored the

opportunities and challenges for their organisations and Viet Nam in responding to climate change, and emphasised that active engagement with these organisations was key to the success of COP26 and will be vital in delivering the commitments of the Glasgow Climate Pact.

He also hosted a roundtable with representatives from international companies to discuss the vast potential of renewable energy in the country. This potential is highlighted in the UK-chaired Energy Transition Council report on coal abatement, which highlights that by switching to wind, solar and gas, by 2030 Viet Nam can reduce 59% of emissions, create 280,000 jobs and save $120bn of fuel imports.

In Indonesia (15-17 February), Mr Sharma met the coordinating Ministers of Maritime Affairs and Investment, and Economic Affairs, and the Ministers for Finance, and Energy and Mineral Resources, thanking each for Indonesia's strong presence at COP26. Mr Sharma welcomed the Indonesian government making climate action a key priority for their G20 Presidency and pledged the UK's support in encouraging all G20 countries to keep to the commitments made in the Glasgow Climate Pact.

This follows fresh UK announcements made at COP26 working with Indonesia and the wider region on nature and biodiversity, climate resilience, renewable technologies, and UK funded green investments to support clean infrastructure projects.

With huge renewable energy resources that could power all the country's electricity needs more than five times over, Mr Sharma also said that Indonesia can become a regional and global leader in low carbon energy technologies and innovation, creating new industries and jobs.

On the final day in Indonesia, Mr Sharma visited the seawall in Jakarta to speak to flood experts and communities on efforts to increase the city's resilience to land subsidence. Extreme weather and sea level rises linked to climate change may make addressing this challenge even more difficult, emphasising the need for support for countries to build resilience to climate change.

COP President Alok Sharma said:

> The Glasgow Climate Pact is making its mark in South East Asia. Vietnam and Indonesia are set on a net zero future.
>
> COP26 was a fragile win and in 2022 we need countries like Vietnam and Indonesia to honour their commitments and revisit their 2030 emissions reduction targets this year.

Speaking after his visit to Viet Nam, Mr Sharma said:

> I welcome the climate leadership Prime Minister Chinh demonstrated at COP26, including the vital goal to reach net zero by 2050.

> It was beneficial to discuss in person how the UK can work with Viet Nam to achieve these ambitious targets, particularly around how improvements in their grid infrastructure could be transformational and help deliver a 2030 plan that aligns with the 1.5 degree temperature limit.

On Indonesia, Mr Sharma said:

> Indonesia, as G20 President, has a vital role to play in ensuring countries deliver what they promised in Glasgow.
>
> The transition to a net zero economy represents an enormous economic opportunity to every country and sector. Net zero has become the guiding light for modern, competitive growth.
>
> As a fast growing economy with significant renewable energy potential, Indonesia has the opportunity to become a climate leader and accelerate the transition from coal power. We and other G20 partners are keen to support and recognise its ambition.

Ends