

UN and UK sign agreement to promote space sustainability

The agreement will help nations ensure that outer space remains safe and sustainable for future generations.

The increasing complexity of space missions, the emergence of large constellations of satellites and the increased risks of collision all affect the long-term sustainability of space activities. And there are currently approximately 170 million objects in orbit – mainly debris – which could collide with satellites vital to services we use every day.

In 2019, the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), of which the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) is Secretariat, adopted the Guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities (LTS guidelines), which provide a framework to ensure the safe and sustainable use of space. The Guidelines were subsequently welcomed by the United Nations General Assembly.

Following today's announcement, UK funding of £85,000 will support international efforts to promote space sustainability by identifying examples of the sustainable use of outer space through a series of events and outreach efforts. This project will also inform future UNOOSA capacity-building efforts to promote the future sustainability of outer space, and it will encourage all actors to implement the LTS guidelines to the fullest extent possible.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

As the Earth's orbit becomes congested with potentially hazardous debris, it's critical that we work with our international partners to secure the continued safety and sustainability of space.

I am therefore delighted the UK is partnering with the UN to implement and promote these vital standards to all emerging and established space-faring nations, helping to ensure that outer space remains open for our next generation of astronauts.

This partnership with the UK Space Agency is the first time the UK has funded a project with UNOOSA. It will enable the UN to raise global awareness on this important issue and foster the global governance of outer space based on international law.

It is also the first project to be funded from the international element of the UK Space Agency's National Space Innovation Programme, launched in October 2020 to support collaborative projects between UK organisations and international partners.

UNOOSA Director Simonetta Di Pippo said:

Global investment, and dependency, on space activities are increasing rapidly. It is essential the international community comes together to make the long-term sustainability of space activities a reality. The LTS Guidelines are a landmark expression of global consensus and effective multilateralism on this crucial subject.

UNOOSA is working to put sustainability at the heart of global space operations. This project, generously funded by our UK partners, will help us 'connect the dots'; converting the successes of multilateral policy-making into practice, and help deliver the predictability the global space economy needs to ensure its sustained growth in the years to come.

[37th Universal Periodic Review: UK statement on Georgia](#)



The United Kingdom welcomes significant progress made by Georgia on human

rights since its last review, and its ongoing co-operation with the OHCHR.

The UK welcomes the creation of an independent agency to investigate human rights violations by law enforcement officers and the creation of a domestic violence unit. However we remain concerned that the judicial reform programme has not been completed. Further reforms are also needed to ensure protection of minorities, including LGBT, women and children; and safeguard media independence.

We recommend that Georgia:

1. Ratify and implement the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention.
2. Adopt an open, merit-based process when selecting national candidates for UN Treaty Body elections.
3. Implement all the recommendations of the recent OSCE/ODIHR election report as soon as possible to restore public confidence in democratic institutions and processes.

Thank you.

Published 26 January 2021

[52 illegal nets and traps seized during a pandemic](#)

In just nine months, from March 2020 to December 2020, 52 illegal fishing traps and nets were retrieved.

26 were found in Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, 14 in Suffolk and Essex, and 12 in Norfolk.

These figures show an increase compared to 2019 where a total of 30 traps were seized across East Anglia over the course of the whole year.

The illegal instruments trap eels, crayfish, water voles, otters and coarse fish. They are a significant risk to wildlife and fish stocks.

Ian Hirst, Fisheries Team Leader for Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire said:

Despite Covid-19 our work to protect wildlife and the environment has remained, while observing social distancing rules.

We would like to thank the members of the public who reported these devices to our incident hotline number 0800 80 70 60.

Also, a special thank you to the agencies and river groups who have helped us recover some of the illegal nets and traps.

We urge the public to report all sightings of these instruments to our incident hotline number so we can investigate.

Lesley Robertson, Enforcement Team Leader for Essex, Norfolk & Suffolk said:

Traps and nets can often be seen from the river bank, and identified by a rope tied to the bankside.

We are very grateful to those who report these illegal traps. Without that information, illegal traps and nets might still be there causing damage to wildlife.

We encourage the public to keep their eyes peeled for any suspicious fishing activities and to call us on our incident hotline 0800 807060.

Our officers are regularly out patrolling the river banks and will not hesitate to take enforcement action.

There are strict rules when it comes to trapping or fishing for crayfish, eels, salmon, sea trout, lamprey and smelt.

You would need an Environment Agency licence to do so – more details here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/permission-to-trap-crayfish-eels-elvers-salmon-and-sea-trout>

All sightings of illegal nets or traps need to be reported to 0800 807060 so we can investigate.

Nick Walkley steps down as Homes England CEO

Press release

Homes England has announced today that Chief Executive Nick Walkley will leave the agency next month.



Nick joined the Homes and Communities Agency as Chief Executive in March 2017 and has led a far-reaching overhaul of the organisation, built around the move to Homes England with a bold mission and strategic plan to increase housing supply and change the housing market.

In a statement, Nick said:

I'm very proud of what we've achieved and I'd like to thank my colleagues and our many industry partners for their dedication and support. My successor will find an organisation brimming with talent, purpose and heart. Homes England is well-positioned to support the country's economic recovery and I wish my colleagues the very best.

Peter Freeman, Chair of the Homes England Board, said in a statement:

On behalf of the Board and colleagues, I would like to thank Nick for his outstanding leadership in building a dynamic, commercial delivery agency. The country faces some crucial choices about how we emerge from the pandemic and Homes England stands ready to support the Government in stimulating economic recovery and increasing housing supply.

Nick Walkley will step down on 28 February. Gordon More, the agency's Chief

Investment Officer, will act as Interim CEO, supported by Lynda McMullan, Chief Financial Officer, and an executive team drawn from the public and private sectors.

Notes to editors

- Nick Walkley joined the Homes and Communities Agency in March 2017. In February 2018, the HCA was relaunched as Homes England with a new mandate to intervene in the housing market in support of the Government's ambitions to build 300,000 homes per annum by the mid-2020s.
- During Nick Walkley's tenure, the agency has frequently met or exceeded its performance targets, while delivering several market-shaping deals. This includes agreeing a total of £1.7bn of strategic partnerships with multiple housing associations, significant land acquisitions and developments such as Burgess Hill, York Central and Northstowe, a ground-breaking partnership with Japan's Sekisui to revolutionise modular construction in this country that was voted 'deal of the decade'
- In the Government's 2020 Spending Review, the agency secured £7.4bn to invest in affordable homes across the country and is preparing to open the new Help to Buy programme to support more first-time buyers into home ownership.

Published 26 January 2021

[New button battery safety campaign](#)

Working with The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, the Child Accident Prevention Trust, and the British and Irish Portable Battery Association, OPSS has produced safety messages on how to keep children safe.

Button batteries are used to power everyday items including car key fobs, remotes, and children's toys – but if swallowed, they could badly injure or kill a child.

Button batteries react with saliva to create caustic soda, which is the chemical often used to unblock drains. If a child swallows a button battery and it gets stuck in their food pipe (oesophagus), it can burn a hole and cause internal bleeding, or even death. If a button battery gets into the stomach, it can also cause significant tissue damage.

Larger lithium 'coin cell' batteries (about the size of a five pence piece) are the most dangerous. Smaller batteries can be inserted into places such as ears and noses, causing serious injuries for children if undetected.

Store spare batteries securely

Store spare button batteries securely and out of children's reach. Be careful when opening multi-packs of button batteries to ensure they do not fall on the floor.

Know what products use button batteries

Ensure that you know what gadgets and toys use button batteries and check that the button battery compartment is secure. Put products with unsecured button batteries out of children's reach. Under product safety regulations, button battery compartments in toys are required to be secured.

Educate older children about button batteries

Communicate with older children about the dangers of button batteries including why they should not play with them or give them to younger children.

Discard dead button batteries straightaway

Dead button batteries can still have enough power to badly hurt a small child. When you remove a button battery, store it securely, and recycle it properly and promptly.

Act promptly if you suspect a child has swallowed a button battery

If you think your child has swallowed a button battery, take them straight to the nearest A&E department or call 999 for an ambulance. Take the battery packaging, toy, or gadget if you can to help staff identify the battery. Symptoms may not be obvious. Your child might be coughing, gagging, or drooling, or pointing to their throat or tummy. Unclear or fluctuating symptoms mean it is important to be vigilant. Do not let your child eat or drink or make your child be sick.

Groups, businesses, and individuals are encouraged to support the button batteries safety messages by retweeting and posting them on social media, using the hashtag #buttonbatteries, or using the shared campaign materials.

The campaign materials can be downloaded from the [consumer safety awareness campaigns materials GOV.UK page](#)

More information about our partners and button batteries

[The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents](#)

[The Child Accident Prevention Trust](#)

[The Chartered Trading Standards Institute](#)

[The British and Irish Portable Battery Association](#)