

[News story: UK aid provides healthcare and education to Palestinian refugees](#)

The UK is supporting the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) to help educate 500,000 children and provide health services for 3 million Palestinian refugees, including those affected by the brutal conflict in Syria.

Speaking at the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference on UNRWA in Rome today (Thursday 15 March), Middle East Minister Alistair Burt highlighted the UK's continuing commitment to supporting Palestinian refugees and called on other countries to do more to alleviate some of the current pressures the agency is facing. He welcomed reform efforts to date and encouraged UNRWA to continue the pace of cost-efficiency reform.

Mr. Burt confirmed that the UK will deliver its next round of financial support earlier than originally planned, to help meet the growing needs of Palestinian refugees across the region.

Minister Burt said:

The UK is unequivocally committed to supporting vulnerable Palestinian refugees by assisting in the provision of education and healthcare across the region which is a key part of our resolve to promote a two-state solution. UNRWA plays a unique and critical role in supporting regional stability, and it's absolutely right that Global Britain supports the sustainability of its services.

Today I'm calling on others to follow our lead to make sure that UNRWA's humanitarian and stabilising role continues uninterrupted. This is not just important for those Palestinians in need of aid, but also to maintain stability across the region which is in all of our interests.

Notes to Editors

- Over the course of the 2017/2018 financial year, the UK has provided around £50 million to UNRWA to support the agency's delivery of food, education and healthcare to vulnerable Palestinians across the Middle East. This makes us one of the top five donors.
 - The UK will provide at least £28 million to UNRWA next financial year, as previously outlined in our multi-year commitment to 2021.
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Press release: Anglers reminded close season runs from 15 March to 15 June

No fishing for coarse fish in rivers from 15 March to 15 June

The Environment Agency is reminding anglers the 'close season' for coarse fish in rivers comes into effect today (Thursday 15 March) and runs until 15 June. The close season prevents fishing for coarse fish, like barbel and chub, for 3 months to give the fish a chance to breed. The close season applies to all rivers, streams and drains in England but does not apply to most still-waters and canals.

During the close season Environment Agency enforcement offices along with support from the Angling Trusts Voluntary Water Bailiffs will be out on rivers and streams making sure people are observing the close season. They will also be checking lakes and ponds to make sure people who are fishing have a valid rod licence. Anyone fishing without a fishing licence can be expected to be prosecuted.

Kevin Austin, Deputy Director, Agriculture, Fisheries and the Natural Environment, said:

Our job is to protect fish stocks and improve fisheries. This includes rescuing fish in distress, improving habitat and restocking rivers with 450,000 fish a year. The majority of anglers, who fish legally, rightly demand that we take action to catch offenders.

Our enforcement officers, supported by Angling Trust voluntary bailiffs, will be targeting illegal fishing. We urge anyone to report illegal fishing as quickly as possible by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Last year the Environment Agency Enforcement Officers ran 670 close season patrols, reporting 122 anglers for illegally fishing in the close season.

Coarse fishing is still allowed on most still waters and canals, depending on fishery owner agreement, though a valid fishing licence is still required. You can check which still waters and canals still have a close season in operation by checking the byelaws which apply in your area at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-fishing-byelaws>. We will be finalising a review of the close season on rivers during 2018. Any changes that arise from this review will be implemented in 2019.

Anyone who wants to go fishing needs to buy a fishing licence. A full annual licence costs £30 (short term and some concessionary licences are also available) and are available online at www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence.

[Press release: Severn tolls abolition spreading prosperity across south east Wales](#)

Today's news that Newport's property market is the fastest moving in Britain has been welcomed by the Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns.

The figures published by property portal Rightmove further evidences how the Welsh economy is going from strength to strength, significantly bolstered by the reduction of the Severn tolls and UK Government's commitment to abolishing them at the end of this year.

A key poll taken at the first UK Government Severn Growth Summit in January revealed that 97% of delegates felt that the removal of the Severn tolls would be of benefit to Wales and companies on both sides of the border are already benefitting from the removal of VAT from the crossing tolls earlier in January.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

When I became Secretary of State for Wales I made it my number one priority to abolish the Severn tolls and send a direct message to industry, commuters and tourists in the UK and globally that Wales is open for business. This UK Government decision is about spreading prosperity across a natural economic region that has been severely hindered by the tolls for over half a century.

With tolls being abolished later this year, it is great to see the transformation of the joint economic and cultural prospects of South Wales and the South West of England already underway. It is just the start of a series of policies that will see the whole of South Wales benefit from an active intervention by the UK Government.

Scrapping the tolls will be the biggest economic stimulus in decades and will transform the economic and cultural prospects of the south Wales and south west England region, making it easier to do business, to increase inward investment and tourism and to create jobs.

Notes to editors

- The Severn Growth Summit was held in January at the Celtic Manor Resort where over 300 guests from both sides of the estuary joined the Secretary of State to discuss cross border growth opportunities

following the abolition of the Severn tolls.

- The Secretary of State for Wales will mark two years in the post on Monday 19 March with the abolition of the tolls highlighted as a key achievement of his tenure.

Press release: CMA announces two senior appointments

Andrea Gomes da Silva becomes Executive Director – Markets & Mergers. Currently the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) Senior Legal Director for Markets, Mergers & Regulatory Appeals, Andrea takes up her new post immediately. The role was made vacant by Andrea Coscelli's promotion to Chief Executive. In her new position, Andrea will join the CMA's Senior Executive Team and will sit on the CMA Board.

George Lusty, currently a Project Director at the CMA, is appointed as Senior Director, Consumer Protection, replacing Nisha Arora who has joined the Financial Conduct Authority. He will oversee work on the CMA's enforcement of consumer protection laws and coordinate relationships with the wider landscape of consumer organisations, joining the Enforcement Senior Leadership Team led by Executive Director, Michael Grenfell.

Welcoming the appointments, the CMA's Chief Executive, Andrea Coscelli, said:

I am very pleased to be able to announce these two appointments to our senior team from within the CMA, from a strong field of candidates. Andrea and George both bring extensive experience from outside the CMA, combined with a proven track record within it. They strengthen our team as we prepare ourselves for a bigger role following EU Exit, and to ensure consumers are getting a fair deal from a rapidly evolving business world.

Mr Coscelli added:

I am also grateful to Rachel Merelie who has been Acting Executive Director during an important period for the CMA.

Andrea Gomes da Silva said:

I am delighted to be taking up this role at an important moment for the organisation. Ensuring the CMA is fit for purpose for Brexit and remains able to deliver good outcomes for UK consumers through

its mergers and markets work matters greatly. I look forward to working with the many excellent colleagues in those areas, and with businesses, consumer groups and a wide range of others to rise to this challenge.

George Lusty said:

Having seen first-hand the difference that the CMA's work can make, I am incredibly excited to be taking on this role. I look forward to working with my talented and dedicated colleagues, and partner consumer organisations, to tackle unfair terms and practices facing people across the UK.

The CMA will shortly be running an open recruitment for Andrea's previous role.

Notes to editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law.
2. Andrea Gomes da Silva joined the CMA in 2015 from Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer where she started in 2001, becoming a partner in 2008. In 2013 she was seconded to the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) to work as part of the team producing the guidance on the CMA's new powers under the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013. Her previous employment was at Slaughter and May where she worked in both the London and Brussels office. At the CMA she has led on legal advice and analysis across the whole range of markets, mergers and sector regulation activities, including [ICE/Trayport](#), [Fox/Sky](#), [Tesco/Booker](#) and the [Energy Market Investigation](#).
3. George joined the CMA in 2014 as a Project Director, and has led a number of the CMA's major consumer and antitrust investigations. He led the CMA's response to its first 'super-complaint' from the consumer body Which?, concerning the [pricing practices of UK supermarkets](#), and the CMA's ongoing investigation into potentially misleading and unfair practices in the [gambling sector](#). George has also led investigations into alleged abuse of dominance by pharmaceutical companies concerning the prices they offer to the NHS. Before joining the CMA, George worked for the UK's Competition Appeal Tribunal as a Référendaire on a range of major competition and regulatory appeals and damages actions. A qualified solicitor, George began his career as an associate at international law firm Simmons & Simmons, specialising in civil and criminal antitrust investigations and utilities regulation.

4. The Executive Director – Markets & Mergers appointment was made in accordance with the requirements set down in the Commissioner for Public Appointments Code of Practice. The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Rt Hon Greg Clarke MP, has made the appointment of Andrea to the CMA's Board. The SD consumer appointment was made in accordance with the requirements set down in the Civil Service Commission Recruitment Principles.
 5. Rachel Merelie, who has been Acting Executive Director, returns to her role as Senior Director, Delivery and Sector Regulation.
 6. For more information on the CMA [see our homepage](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).
 7. Enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 020 3738 6191.
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[News story: Ground-breaking satellite projects will transform society](#)

Ordnance Survey MasterMap.

The electric vehicle charging point project, led by Energeo Ltd working with Bournemouth Borough Council, will combine satellite imagery, Open Data, and Machine Learning to deliver an interactive map based user interface. This will help the council identify charge point requirements via visualisation of different features and influences on EV roll out, such as existing charge points, residential driveway availability and size, and footpath width and potential obstructions.

The eight new projects are part of the UK Space Agency's [Space for Smarter Government Programme](#), which demonstrates the potential of using satellite technology to solve challenges faced by the public sector.

Satellite data and applications which use space have the potential to change the way the public sector works, leading to better services and lower costs. This in turn could help boost the growth of the UK space sector, which is already worth £13.7 billion to the economy and provides around 40,000 jobs.

The announcement comes on the day the Space Industry Act received Royal Assent, which will unlock an exciting era of British space innovation, exploration and investment. The Act will enable the first commercial space launch from UK soil in history, creating the potential for hundreds of

highly-skilled jobs and bringing in billions of pounds for the economy.

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

“These projects demonstrate the potential of satellite technology to benefit life on Earth with innovative solutions to challenges ranging from monitoring plastic waste in the sea to supporting the roll out of charge points for electric cars.

“As set out in our Industrial Strategy, the UK Space Agency is working together with industry to ensure the UK thrives in the commercial space age. The Space for Smarter Government Programme is transforming the way the public sector works. It will stimulate innovation and growth, while helping the public sector save money and improve decision making.”

The Environment Agency will collaborate on two projects, one of which deploys satellites and drones in the battle against marine waste and the other will use satellite data to monitor flood defences in the Thames Estuary.

Dr John Kupiec, Environment Agency’s Innovation Manager, said:

“The Environment Agency is delighted to support the development of these innovative projects that will help us work towards protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development.

“The Government’s 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment highlighted the problem of plastics in the environment – particularly in marine and coastal environments. By using Earth Observation and other novel technologies we hope to accomplish our common goals in reducing plastic and other waste pollution.”

The UK Space Agency is providing training to policymakers as well as access to data, wider expertise and market capability as part of the programme. Working alongside public sector partners, academia and industry can help bring new satellite applications to market to meet UK needs.

The full list of projects, which have received a combined total of more than £700,000 in funding, can be found below:

Project title

City Level Energy Analysis for Electric Vehicle Charging Points

Funding

£59,898

End user

Bournemouth Borough Council

Lead organisation

EnergEO Limited

Energieo's CLEAN EV service will utilise geospatial Big Data (such as satellite imagery), Open Data, and Machine Learning in conjunction with strategic textual information. It will deliver an interactive, web based tool, designed to support roll out of Electric Vehicle charge point (EVCP) infrastructure in urban environments via intuitive visualisation, contextualisation and analysis of data in a map based user interface.

Public sector end users will be able to efficiently identify charge point requirements via visualisation of different features and influences on EV roll out, such as existing charge points, residential driveway availability and size, and footpath width and potential obstructions, in order to provide an accurate overview of current and potential EVCP preparedness. In addition, users will be able to identify specific features manually through the map interface, or run queries in order to model pre-determined scenarios that will support the strategic decision making process.

Project title

Transport modelling based on PNT data

Funding

£59,950

End user

Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset

Lead organisation

City Science

This project takes a range of position, navigation and timing (PNT) data and assesses the feasibility of its use to provide accurate and informative outputs within a transport planning context. Using PNT data, the project will investigate issues such as the scheduling and impact of HGV deliveries, the associated impact on congestion, bus timetable reliability and the distribution of journeys at different times of day. It will do this by integrating PNT data with traffic simulation and modelling models.

The outputs will be a data-based understanding of existing and future pinch points across a range of transport modes that are robust, fit-for-purpose and meet the needs of the local authority.

Project title

Urban healthy living using satellite enabled air pollution monitoring and mitigation

Funding

£123,582.09

End user

Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire

Lead organisation

Geospatial Insight Ltd

This project addresses how air pollution exposure affects wide swathes of public sector policy and programmes. Management and mitigation of adverse air pollution exposure by integrating space-enabled technologies with other public-sector initiatives offers prospects for smarter, more efficient operations, risk reduction and enhanced policy delivery in many key areas, notably healthcare and urban air quality management.

Geospatial Insight Ltd will lead a team of innovative SMEs to work in partnership with leading public authority stakeholders to demonstrate beneficial disruptive interventions in primary and secondary healthcare provision and urban planning through the management of ambient air pollution.

Project title

Quantifying Congested Maritime Environments

Funding

£60,000

End user

United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO)

Lead organisation

SCISYS UK Ltd

Improved understanding of patterns of life in congested maritime environments will allow greater situational awareness for users of maritime waterways. The well-established Automatic Identification System (AIS) can determine movements of large vessels, but smaller vessels without AIS are less well understood and remain difficult to quantify. Some vessels in this category are visible from space using radar and optical satellite imagery, which may also capture tidal and seasonal changes.

SCISYS's novel approach involves automatically mining through archives of satellite data to build up a picture of spatial and temporal activity, taking variations in data availability into account. The main advantage is that this approach locates all objects of a certain size, irrespective of their type or

if they are broadcasting an AIS signal, thereby delivering value-add information to existing maritime products and services. The United Kingdom Hydrographic Office will partner SCISYS for this feasibility study.

Project title

Space Derived Condition Assessment tool for CNI Structural Risk Management

Funding

£172,974

End user

Environment Agency

Lead organisation

Geomatic Ventures Limited

This project aims to provide a basis for the regular remote assessment of structural condition for Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) asset owners such as power stations, railways, roads, gas storage facilities, runways, flood defences and water treatment works. It will provide early warning indicators of potential engineering failures through absolute motion vector mapping using a combination of satellite based radar with satellite navigation.

The project uses satellite based remote sensing to provide initial wide area, medium resolution screening and identify relevant site criticalities. Using national threshold standards it will target higher resolution deformation studies. An asset risk index will be developed so that the remote sensing techniques can be applied on soft and hard targets and used to inform asset condition across a range of asset types.

Project title

GeoInt Service for Marine Litter

Funding

£60,000

End user

Environment Agency

Lead organisation

ARGANS Ltd

The GeoInt Service for Marine Litter is a platform developed by ARGANS Ltd, aiming to integrate big data sources about marine litter from satellites,

drones and citizen science initiatives on a single platform. The goal is to provide synoptic information to the public, voluntary and private sectors with an interest and decision-making capability to support policy-making, cleaning, prevention operations and long-term monitoring.

Local, regional and national authorities, NGOs, foundations, conservation societies, waste management companies and industry especially those focused on the circular economy will benefit from this service. ARGANS Ltd has received end user support from the Environment Agency, Cornwall Council, and European Space Agency.

Project title

AI Satellite Pluvial flood forecasting

Funding

£129,922

End user

Greater London Authority

Lead organisation

Ambiental Environmental Assessment Ltd

This project aims to help the public sector to increase the uptake of satellite and Earth Observation data via sustainable 'live' services relating to surface water flood forecasting, and associated dynamic mapping of changing patterns of green space in urban areas.

The goal is to enable smarter, more efficient operations, reduce risk/cost and enhance the quality of decision-making within the public sector in real-time. A novel aspect of the project involves utilising Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance situational awareness and provide actionable intelligence.

Project title

E0-derived soil moisture estimation

Funding

£55,900

End user

Network Rail

Lead organisation

CGG NPA Satellite Mapping

This project will improve the understanding of soil moisture evaluation from Earth Observation (EO) data. Soil moisture can have significant impacts on asset management within the rail sector. The occurrence of earthwork failures have been shown to correspond with ground (soil) saturation and weather conditions reported at the time of failure. NPA's EO experts believe that soil moisture estimation algorithms developed for use with Sentinel-1 data could facilitate the remote estimation of soil moisture. If successful, this capability should improve Network Rail's ability to identify the most at-risk parts of its network. It is hoped that this solution will also benefit other public sector organisations concerned with asset management. In addition to working with Network Rail as a public sector end user, NPA will also receive support from the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) and British Geological Survey (BGS).

For more information about the work of SSGP and to view other case studies, please visit the [Space for Smarter Government Programme website](#), or contact the team at ssgp@ukspaceagency.bis.gsi.gov.uk