

Natural England prescribes ponies and pasties to improve wellbeing

Press release

Wild ponies at a Natural England nature reserve in Cornwall have been boosting people's mental health thanks to a winter series of events.



Cicendia and the other ponies at Goss Moor NNR have become very popular during Natural England's Green Social Prescribing activities

Green social prescribing is the practice of supporting people to engage in nature-based activities. This can include activities such as walking, cycling, community gardening and food-growing projects, as well as practical conservation tasks such as tree planting.

But at Goss Moor National Nature Reserve (NNR), the herd of 26 wild Dartmoor and Shetland ponies have been the focus of a unique and free activity where attendees, either referred by a social prescribing link worker or self-referred, find the ponies using a tracking app.

Feedback from the 4 events held between December and March have been positive, with attendees saying they left feeling 'informed, healthier, happier' and would visit Goss Moor NNR again.

Janine Sargent, the Natural England visitor warden who ran the events, said:

Green Social Prescribing events like this are wonderful for connecting people with nature, which is great for mental health and wellbeing.

Goss Moor can be a very wild and windy place with tricky terrain, but our guests have had a great time during these walks, with free pasties being offered to participants to keep everyone sustained and fuelled.

The walks are part of a longer-term plan to recruit pony checking volunteers, acting as a 'taster' session for this role, and they have already been successful in attracting some potential new volunteers.

The wild ponies guided walks was one of 30 projects funded by the G7 Legacy Project. Future events, including photography for mindfulness, a cycling event for young people and more pony activities will be posted on [The Growing Goss Project Facebook Page](#).

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Action needed on “dysfunctional” children’s social care market

- Market study recommends development of national and regional bodies to support local authorities with getting suitable placements for children
- CMA also seeking to address concerns about financial stability of private children’s home providers and high profits in the sector, through financial health assessments and by boosting in-house foster care

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched a market study into children’s social care in March 2021.

The final report, published today, found there is a shortage of appropriate places in children’s homes and with foster carers, meaning that some children are not getting the right care from their placement. Some children are also being placed too far away from where they previously lived or in placements that require them to be separated from their siblings.

This shortage also means that high prices are often being paid by local authorities, who are responsible for placing children in appropriate settings, with these costs picked up by taxpayers. The CMA’s analysis finds that the main reason for this is the fragmented system by which services are commissioned, which means that local authorities are not able to leverage their role as the purchasers of placements or to plan properly for the future.

To address these issues, the CMA is recommending that the UK Government, Scottish and Welsh Governments create or develop national and regional organisations that could support local authorities with their responsibilities in this sector. These would improve commissioning by carrying out and publishing national and regional analysis and providing local authorities and collective bodies with guidance and by supporting them to meet more placement needs in their local area.

The CMA is also concerned about the financial resilience of some private providers of children's homes in England and Wales, particularly those financed through private equity. High levels of debt among these firms could lead to them getting into financial difficulties, which could impact the care provided to children.

To address these issues, the CMA is proposing:

- a system for assessing the financial health of the most difficult to replace providers of children's homes and providing warnings to relevant authorities if a failure is likely;
- that options are actively explored for bringing foster care in-house;
- a review of the barriers to provision of children's homes, as well as the recruitment and the retention of care staff and foster carers.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

The UK has sleepwalked into a dysfunctional children's social care market. This has left local authorities hamstrung in their efforts to find suitable and affordable placements in children's homes or foster care.

We have also identified issues with the financial stability of children's home providers. It is important to manage the risk of children's homes providers going bust and local authorities having to pick up the pieces.

Local authorities cannot be left to face these challenges alone. There are several areas where national governments should make changes to address issues in the sector, including new financial oversight of providers and the development of new bodies to support local authorities with commissioning. With children's social care currently being reviewed across the UK we want to see our recommendations reflected in any changes to policy.

The study looked at the provision of children's social care in England, Scotland and Wales, across which there are over 100,000 looked-after children. The current annual cost for children's social care services is around £5.7 billion in England, £680 million in Scotland and £350 million in Wales.

The CMA's market study found that large private sector providers of fostering services and children homes appear to be making higher profits in England and Wales than the CMA would expect in a well-functioning market. This suggests that local authorities may be paying more for these services than they need to, particularly with fostering services, which are cheaper when run by local authorities.

The market study highlights and reflects the significant differences in the policy context for children's social care between England, Scotland and Wales. The devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales have each committed

to move away from the model of for-profit provision in children's social care, and national organisations already exist in these nations to support local authorities. The recommendations the CMA makes will be relevant for each nation as they move through their own policy reform processes.

1. Market studies, like this one, may lead to a range of outcomes, including recommendations to businesses in the market and to the government to change regulations or public policy.
2. The children's social care system is the subject of significant policy attention across the UK, including through the independent review of children's social care in England, the implementation of the Promise review recommendations in Scotland and the Welsh Government's Rebalancing care and support White Paper. The CMA's recommendations will feed into ongoing policy reviews in the three nations in scope. In England, the CMA expects the recommendations to be considered as part of the ongoing Independent Review of Children's Social Care, which is due to report this year. In Scotland and Wales, the CMA expects its recommendations to feed into the implementation of on-going reform proposals, including commitments to remove profit-making from the children's social care sector.
3. Media queries should be directed to: press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460.

[The Platinum Jubilee Afternoon Tea and Cake Competition in Japan](#)

This year marks Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's 70th year on the throne, making her the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee. This is an amazing milestone, an inspiring example of public service and a happy occasion for people in the United Kingdom and around the world to celebrate. Across the United Kingdom, there will be many celebrations taking place throughout this year, with a special series of events concentrated around The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Central Weekend on 3-6 June. Over Her Majesty's 70 year reign, the Royal and Japanese Imperial families have enjoyed a close relationship and the wider partnership between the UK and Japan has gone from strength to strength in a wide range of areas; from cultural and educational exchanges to trade and investment links, and from defence and security cooperation to joint action on climate change. The British Embassy in Tokyo and British Consulate-General in Osaka would therefore like to bring the Platinum Jubilee celebrations to Japan and invite you to be part of them.

Who can participate?:

5-star Hotels in Japan serving afternoon tea

“Platinum Jubilee Afternoon Tea” and “Platinum Jubilee Cake” competition

Two of the activities that we are launching are, “The Platinum Jubilee Afternoon Tea” and a “Platinum Jubilee Cake Competition”.

Firstly, we would like to ask 5-star hotels around Japan to organise a celebratory festival of “Platinum Jubilee Afternoon Teas” for a period of their choice within the Platinum Jubilee year of 2022 and to create a cake (or cakes) fit for a Queen for your guests to enjoy. As part of this festival, each hotel should design and create a cake (or cakes) to be served at the afternoon teas.

Secondly, we will be holding a “Platinum Jubilee Cake competition” to select a cake to symbolise and form a key part of our celebrations. We would like to invite you to enter the cake that you serve at your afternoon tea into this competition.

- The cake (or cakes) should be an original creation and reflect something about the UK or the close partnership between the UK and Japan.
- The cake needs to have at least one ingredient from the UK.
- The cake design should be original and should not have been previously entered into another competition.
- There are no restrictions on the type of cake (pastry/ sponge/ tart etc.), but the cake design must be “fit for a Queen” and should be appropriate to be served at the Queen’s Birthday Party at the British Embassy Tokyo as well as at their own establishment during afternoon tea.
- Each hotel is welcome to make as many cake designs as they wish but you will only be allowed to enter one cake into the competition.

In return:

After confirming participation, we will provide you with relevant material, including the official Platinum Jubilee logo, which can be used for branding materials.

The short-listed candidates will be invited to bring their cakes to the British Embassy for the Queen’s Birthday Party in June where the winning cake will be announced. The winning cake will be an important part of the celebrations marking Her Majesty’s 70 years as Monarch.

For more information:

Please check the [criteria](#) and sign up via [the online form](#)

We hope that you will want to join us in this exciting celebration and look forward to hearing from you.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact platinumjubileecake.tokyo@fcdo.gov.uk

PM drives up regional investment with 30-year strategy to secure shipbuilding future

- PM announces £4 billion injection into regional shipbuilding to support thousands of high-quality jobs
- Funding will support shipyards and suppliers across the UK, delivering a pipeline of more than 150 new naval and civil vessels
- PM visits Merseyside dockyard as the Government launches a refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy to galvanise sector

The Prime Minister will visit a Merseyside dockyard today as he announces a £4 billion injection into the UK's regional shipbuilding industry to create tens of thousands of high-quality jobs.

The multi-billion pound investment will galvanise and support shipyards and suppliers across the UK, delivering a pipeline of more than 150 new naval and civil vessels for the UK Government and Devolved Administrations over the next 30 years.

The funding comes as the Ministry of Defence prepares to publish its refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSbS) today, which will outline how the Government will support UK shipyards across the nation to upskill workers, create high-quality jobs, drive technology development and ensure UK shipbuilding delivers on next-generation challenges.

The strategy also builds on the UK's increased support for European defence capability in the face of rising Russian aggression, with UK defence giant Babcock successfully being chosen as Poland's preferred partner to deliver three new warships based on the UK's Type 31 design.

During his visit the Prime Minister will meet apprentices and shipbuilding experts to understand how UK Government investment is creating jobs and levelling up communities across the country.

The UK's historic shipbuilding industry currently supports 42,600 jobs across the UK, from Cornwall to Belfast and Govan, and contributes more than £2.8 billion to the economy.

The Prime Minister said:

Shipbuilding has been in our blood for centuries and I want to ensure it remains at the heart of British industry of generations to come.

The National Shipbuilding Strategy will transform this important and crucial industry, creating jobs, driving technology development and upskilling the shipbuilders of tomorrow, ensuring we are levelling up across every dock, port and shipyard in the UK.

This will ensure the UK is rightly seen as a shipbuilding power across the world .

The NSbS Refresh will also establish a new UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce, led by the Department for Education. The taskforce will work with industry and training providers across the UK to identify and address skills gaps, ensuring the UK continues to develop and nurture future-focused skills and knowledge to help our shipbuilders deliver the world-class vessels of tomorrow.

Meanwhile, as part of the strategy, the Department for Transport will invest £206 million in the UK Shipping Office for Reducing Emissions (UK-SHORE) to match fund research and development in zero emission vessels and infrastructure and ensure our place as global leader in green technology.

UK-SHORE will help to tackle barriers to investment in clean maritime technologies, including investment in port infrastructure.

A new Maritime Capability Campaign Office (MCCO) within the Department for International Trade will also be established. The MCCO will coordinate export support across government and industry and use robust analysis to improve our understanding about global markets, helping maritime suppliers to win export orders and increase UK market share.

Defence Secretary and Shipbuilding Tsar Ben Wallace said:

As Shipbuilding Tsar, I am proud to be announcing our new strategy, this is an exciting time to be involved in the sector.

With significant government investment, we will be levelling-up across our shipbuilding, workforce, from shipyard to supplier, from procurement to designer, creating tens of thousands of new employment opportunities, boosting living standards and pay.

Our refreshed strategy will see the sector galvanised at a crucial

time for our economy and see a vital part of British industry expand and flourish.

Government backs innovative businesses with new £150 million loan scheme

- Government launches new series of loans worth £150 million to support innovative SMEs and level up the UK
- launch of the loans programme will broaden the financial support available to businesses, ensuring they can access funding at all stages of innovation
- builds on the successful pilot programme that provided £163 million to around 200 businesses in all parts of the UK, supporting hundreds of jobs

Some of the UK's most innovative businesses are set to benefit from a new series of loan competitions offering up to £150 million to support their research and development projects, the government announced today.

The loans will support innovations deemed to have the strongest potential to support future economic growth and tackle social challenges, across fields such as net zero, health and wellbeing, and next-generation digital technologies, as well as the '7 Technology Families' of the [Innovation Strategy](#) – advanced materials and manufacturing; engineering biology; electronics; sensors; photonics and quantum; and robotics and smart machines.

The funding, to be delivered through Innovate UK, will be available to SMEs over the next 3 years and will prioritise projects focused on the most important areas of the future economy as set out in the Innovate UK [Plan for Action](#). Businesses can apply for funding through the [Innovation Funding Service](#).

The loans are part of the government's plan to build on the measures outlined last year in its Innovation Strategy, enabling UK innovators to access the right finance at the right time in order to grow, building on our world-leading research capability and helping to secure the UK's position as a science superpower.

Projects supported via the successful loan programme to date have included portable freezers able to safely deliver vaccines to care homes and surgeries, a platform designed to protect hospitals and healthcare centres from cyber-attacks during the pandemic, and patented hospital screens preventing the transmission of pathogens and viruses.

Science Minister George Freeman said:

As the success of our extraordinary vaccine development and roll-out made clear, the UK is home to some of the most brilliant and innovative minds in the world.

Supporting our talented innovators, not only to develop their ideas but to see these ideas through to commercialisation, will be essential to growing an economy built on the technologies of the future, and securing the UK's status as a true Innovation Nation.

So, I am thrilled that after an extremely successful pilot programme, Innovate UK are launching this substantial new series of loans to support SMEs working across the country on the most innovative projects for the future economy, entrenching our position as a science superpower.

Businesses with innovative late-stage projects can apply for a loan between £100,000 and £2 million, with flexible repayment terms to help secure their future growth and commercial success. The new full-scale programme will start with monthly competition rounds, for which applicants will need to demonstrate evidence of a high quality proposed innovation project, suitability to take on a loan, and inability to access finance for their project from commercial finance providers.

This government-backed finance builds on the success of an extended pilot programme that has been delivered by Innovate UK Loans Limited since 2017, and the programme of innovation continuity loans delivered as part of Innovate UK's coronavirus support package.

Innovation loans are designed to support suitable micro, small and medium sized-businesses (SMEs) in carrying out late-stage research and development projects, with a clear route to commercial success to drive productivity and growth across the UK.

Indro Mukerjee, CEO of Innovate UK, said:

Innovation loans are an important part of the investment support that Innovate UK offers to help UK businesses achieve their growth ambitions. We have tested this new form of support rigorously and I am pleased that we can now offer £150 million over the next 3 years through innovation loans as part of our commitment to support innovative businesses to grow rapidly and achieve scale.

The innovation loans scheme is just one of the services to growing and scaling businesses across the UK. Our wrap-around support now includes greater access to Innovate UK EDGE, a business advisory service; and Innovate UK KTN, more opportunity for businesses to connect with potential academic and business partners to help scale in the UK and abroad.

Allied with this is our continued work with the British Business Bank and private finance to provide further backing for UK

innovators.

The decision to transition from pilot to full-scale loans programme was taken following an [independent evaluation of the scheme's success](#), which found that the pilot had been extremely effective, and that the innovation loans programme is viewed as a key finance product within the market, supplying essential funding that would not have been available elsewhere.

The innovation loans programmes to date have committed £163 million to around 200 businesses in all parts of the UK, enabling new product development and commercialisation activities, supporting investment in research jobs and delivering growing levels of sales. Over a third of businesses in the portfolio have accessed additional private investment, leveraging new capital of over £110 million, with an average raise of £1.8 million.