

PRESS RELEASE

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Lyell Centre to lead Vietnam coastal plastic project

The Lyell Centre's Prof Michel Kaiser will lead a multimillion pound research project that will investigate the impact of plastic pollution on Vietnam's economy and health, and help find remedies.

Professor Kaiser who also is Chief Scientist at Heriot-Watt University, will work with colleagues from the Lyell Centre and other parts of the university, as well as commercial partners and not-for-profit organisations based in the UK and Vietnam.

UKRI is investing £20million in five projects through its Global Challenges Research Fund. This project is one of the five to receive funding, and all will focus on improving our understanding of the impact of plastic pollution in developing countries.

Professor Michel Kaiser said: "Plastics are an environmental issue around the world, but they are particularly problematic in south-east Asia, and in Vietnam in particular.

"We will investigate Vietnam's coastal plastic pollution and its impact on aquaculture and fisheries, tourism and other businesses, as well as the impact on human health and wellbeing.

"One of our priorities is to quantify the problem, calculating how much plastic is in coastal waters, and where it ends up. We will also evaluate which mitigation measures are most effective, and where.

"We are in an excellent position due to the Lyell Centre's existing links with universities and policymakers on the ground in Vietnam, and our industrial connections. Sainsbury's, the Co-operative and Labeyrie guardiFine Foods are all part of our team, they'll be giving us access to their supply chain in Vietnam.

"NGOs like the Global Ghost Gear Initiative will also form a critical part of our team."

Dr Tracy Shimmield, Director of the Lyell Centre said: "I am delighted that Michel has been awarded this grant. This is an incredibly important piece of work that will be of great benefit to Vietnam.

"The Lyell Centre is steadily building its portfolio of research in the area of aquaculture and fisheries and the impact of coastal pollution. This funding award illustrates the depth of expertise in this sector that we have here at the Lyell."

Professor Sir Duncan Wingham, Executive Chair of the Natural Environment Research Council, which is leading the programme within UKRI, said: “This investment of £20 million is a vital step in helping world-leading researchers develop realistic and feasible solutions to reduce plastic pollution while enabling equitable, sustainable growth.”

Sources, sinks and solutions for impacts of plastics on coastal communities in Vietnam will launch in January 2021.

For more information, contact Michel Kaiser: m.kaiser@hw.ac.uk

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The Lyell Centre

The Lyell Centre is a strategic partnership between Heriot-Watt University and the British Geological Survey, funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), the Scottish Funding Council and Heriot-Watt University. The partnership enables them to work together combining their expertise in geoscience. Exploring themes ranging from geology and geophysics to marine ecosystems, the centre’s combination of pure and applied expertise employs innovative methods and technologies to society’s most important environmental science and energy challenges.

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