

Press release: Making Tax Digital for VAT pilot open for business

Making Tax Digital for VAT will make it easier for businesses to manage their tax and will save them, and their agents, time which can instead be devoted to maximising business opportunities, encouraging growth and fostering good financial planning.

From 1 April 2019, under Making Tax Digital, around 1 million businesses registered for VAT with a taxable turnover above £85,000 will need to keep their VAT records digitally and file their returns using Making Tax Digital-compatible software.

The pilot opens today for around half a million businesses whose affairs are up to date and straightforward, and will extend to most other business types over the coming months. HMRC has also listened to concerns and will give a small group of customers with more complex requirements a further 6 months to prepare. This will ensure there is sufficient time for testing the service with them in the pilot before they are required to join.

[Mel Stride MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury](#), said:

HMRC is transforming the tax administration so that it's more effective, more efficient and easier for taxpayers. Today's announcement means that around half a million businesses will be able to join Making Tax Digital and start filing their VAT returns online, making it easier to get their tax right first time.

More and more businesses use digital tools every day to help them operate – tax shouldn't be different. This is a major step towards bringing VAT into the 21st century.

Theresa Middleton, Director for Making Tax Digital for Business, said:

Millions of people are already banking, paying bills and interacting with their suppliers and customers online. Using digital tools to help businesses manage their business income and expenses and get their tax right builds on this momentum and will also help them get more control over their finances.

Eligible businesses and agents shouldn't leave preparations to the last minute and are encouraged to join the pilot as soon as they can. Read [more information on Making Tax Digital](#).

Background

HMRC's ambition is to become one of the most digitally advanced tax administrations in the world and Making Tax Digital is making fundamental changes to the way the tax system works – transforming tax administration so that it is:

- more effective
 - more efficient
 - easier for taxpayers to get their tax right
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News story: Dounreay management makes long-term employment commitment to workforce

Around 1,100 Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL) staff taking apart the former research site have been told about a series of future commitments including the offer of a job with one of the companies behind the site's parent body organisation Cavendish Dounreay Partnership.

Managing Director Phil Craig said:

Our mission is around safety, delivery and the future transition of our people. We recognise that ongoing employment could become a distraction as decommissioning becomes more visible in the years ahead and so we want to act early and ensure our employees have a number of options. Everyone will have different aspirations so there cannot be a single solution.

There are some exciting opportunities on the horizon for the Highlands and beyond. We will develop training and support programmes to put individuals in the strongest possible position to move into another local job with one of the growing industries such as space or renewable energy. Importantly, there will also be a job offer with one of Dounreay's parent companies for any DSRL staff member who wishes to receive one.

Cavendish Dounreay Partnership is a consortium made up of Cavendish Nuclear, Jacobs and AECOM. Together they employ more than 220,000 with locations around the world including Caithness.

Jamie Stone, Member of Parliament for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, said:

The Dounreay workforce has developed skills that are second to none and we should be proud of the work that they are doing to decommission the site. It is difficult to know that you are ultimately working your way out of a job and so I welcome early consideration of how these skills can be put to the best possible use in the future. The commitment from Cavendish Dounreay Partnership to offer jobs is good news for the workforce and I will be working with them to ensure as many of those roles as possible are based within this community.

Gail Ross, Member of the Scottish Parliament for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross, added:

This is a positive announcement, not only for those working at Dounreay today, but for our community looking forward. It provides options and reassurance to many of the highly skilled workers who will seek ongoing employment. By making an announcement now, everyone has time to work together and understand how this can best benefit staff, the companies involved and our local area.

Cavendish Dounreay Partnership Chairman Simon Bowen said:

This is an early but clear commitment. The principle is to ensure that everyone who wants a job when their role at Dounreay is complete finds ongoing employment. We will be working with trade unions, local businesses and others in the months and years ahead to develop the detail and ensure the support is there for a team that right now has a busy programme of work ahead of it, delivering one of the most technically challenging nuclear closure programmes of its kind.

News story: Geovation programme continues to attract innovators

The Geovation Programme has been running for 3 years. So far, it has helped 72 GeoTech and PropTech businesses create 189 new jobs and raise £19.5 million in investment funding.

Businesses joining the start-up accelerator each receive up to £20,000 in funding and a range of resources and services, including access to experienced software developers, geospatial expertise from Ordnance Survey, property expertise from HM Land Registry, and specialist mentoring to assist

with business proposals and investor relationships.

The latest group to receive this help and benefits are:

- [getGround](#) makes transacting property in the UK buy-to-let market speedier and more cost-effective
- [ADVC8](#) provides innovative software and digital marketing services to law firms wanting to increase business opportunities and grow their client base
- [Skyroom](#) partners with major landlords to help them turn their disused rooftops into high-quality, low-cost, eco-friendly homes for key urban workers
- [QFlow](#) uses Internet of Things technology to help businesses manage their resources more sustainably on construction and development sites
- [RunFriendly](#) takes an Airbnb approach by helping people find run-friendly routes, people and places
- [ONIGO](#) provides immersive adventure games in London's greatest parks
- [ProxyAddress](#) uses empty addresses to connect those facing homelessness with the support they need by creating a 'proxy' address that can be used to access services and provide identification regardless of location

David Lidington, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, said:

This Government is committed to helping put British companies onto the global stage. By supporting and promoting emerging technologies, we are creating more opportunities for businesses both large and small. The Geovation Programme has created nearly 200 jobs and raised £19.5m in investment and is an excellent example of how data and technology can be used to improve lives.

Jenna Brown, CEO and co-founder of Shipamax, one of the first businesses to enter the Geovation Programme, said:

We needed experience and access to people with that geospatial and mapping expertise because our business is fundamentally about how we navigate ships around the world. We visited a lot of start-up offices around town and I think the Geovation Hub is one of the few spaces that actually feels like you can get work done.

We found it really useful having someone always there on the business side of things – advising on fundraising etc, and on the development side – making sure we're set up to work as a team, and knowing how we can get access to different data sources, which was really important to us. Technologies with that mapping element to it, I think, are going to grow in importance, especially as things get more real-time. There's a really big place for Geovation in helping start-ups get involved and moving in the right direction.

Orla Shields is the founder of PropTech company GetRentr, which uses artificial intelligence to track UK property licensing regulations and consultations in real-time to ensure property portfolios are compliant. After a successful application, Orla's company was one of the first PropTech businesses to join the Geovation Programme when it expanded to accepting PropTech businesses as well as GeoTech ones.

In the months that followed, Orla and GetRentr raised over £500,000 in funding and are currently working with letting agents and landlords and have partnerships with Association of Residential Letting Agents and the National Landlord Association.

Orla said:

Geovation has been life-changing. The £20,000 grant has helped us do things we couldn't have done while we were waiting to secure other investment. Free office space in Clerkenwell is a major benefit for any business – early stage or not. It's a great environment, with numerous other inspiring start-ups in a similar field.

Geovation's network and connections with major people in this industry and in government is priceless. The team is very proactive, and their support and experience was really helpful and always available. One of the best benefits has been the ability to use Ordnance Survey and HM Land Registry data. This gives us the option to reach out to more people who are looking to invest and be strategic with their portfolios. It has also helped us predict where regulations will be implemented. Overall, the culture at Geovation is one of collaboration and support.

Press release: Release of Independent Inquiry Report into Bullying and Harassment of House of Commons Staff

We have received Dame Laura Cox's report today. It is clearly a rigorous piece of work which raises very serious issues about the conduct and culture of the House. We will be discussing her report and important observations at our next meeting and will be maintaining a close interest in how the House Authorities and senior leadership respond.

Press release: New training centre to keep Oxfordshire a hi-tech hotspot

Oxfordshire Advanced Skills (OAS) is a partnership between the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and the Science & Technology Facilities Council (STFC) to increase the number of trained technicians available to local employers.

Construction of the 3,800-square metre new OAS centre is underway at UKAEA's Culham site, undertaken by Midas Construction Ltd. The building will welcome its first intake of apprentices in September 2019.

OAS Phase 1 has been operational and training apprentices for two years in an existing facility at Culham. The number of trainees has increased to almost 80 and there are now 16 partner employers on board. New employers sending their apprentices to OAS this year include Veolia Oxford Technologies, Oxford Instruments, Polar Technology, Valeofoods, Abbott and Satellite Applications Catapult.

The new building will be able to accommodate many more apprentices, with industry-standard equipment covering a wide range of engineering and technology disciplines. OAS is working with local businesses to ensure the facilities meet their advanced training needs.

Apprentice training at the new OAS centre (OAS Phase 2) will be provided by the MTC's Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre (AMTC). AMTC is a state-of-the-art training centre based next to the Manufacturing Technology Centre near Coventry. It has an impressive track record in teaching not only core engineering skills but also the latest advanced manufacturing techniques being used in industry.

David Martin, the UK Atomic Energy Authority's Chief Operating Officer – himself a former apprentice and the driving force behind OAS – said:

Oxfordshire is one of Europe's biggest areas for science and technology, and the amount of people employed in these industries is four times the national average. We can only sustain this success if we have more skilled young people coming through, and OAS is a vital part of this skills pipeline.

The number of new starters at OAS for 2018 proves the demand exists for high quality apprenticeships in the area. The employer-led training centre we are building at Culham will allow us to greatly expand our capacity and provide more local firms with technicians who can go straight into the workplace with the skills the employer

needs.

In AMTC we are partnering with one of the UK's most forward-thinking training organisations. They will give apprentices at OAS access to new technologies and ways of working, ready for the hi-tech industries of the future.

Paul Rowlett, Managing Director of the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre, said:

Having an insight into tomorrow's technology gives us the ability to create training programmes and apprenticeships to equip industry with a capable workforce. We are delighted to be working with UKAEA and STFC to deliver the Oxfordshire Advanced Skills training programme. There is a clear synergy and shared vision across our organisations.

Helen Johnson, Head of Apprenticeship & Graduate Schemes at STFC said:

STFC already employs more than 80 apprentices across our laboratories and has a vibrant and growing apprenticeship programme, recruiting and training apprentices in engineering, project management, computing and ICT. They are an integral part of STFC's skill base and this expansion of what OAS is able to offer engineering and technology apprentices is fantastic news for STFC and the many partner organisations we work with in the commercial and public sectors.

Ends

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