

[News story: Scottish Secretary tours Stirling University's world-leading Institute of Aquaculture](#)

Scottish Secretary David Mundell met with academics at Stirling University and toured the Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre to hear about their work, and how UK Government funding to the university – [part of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal](#) will help them continue their cutting edge research and innovation.

The City Region Deal confirms that the UK Government will invest £17 million to build a new Aquaculture Hub for Innovation.

This will be unique in Scotland and the UK, and will operate four aquatic research facilities which between them will provide the full range of marine environmental conditions.

The hub will create research and development opportunities that will secure jobs and an economic contribution in the process.

The deal also confirms that the UK Government will invest up to £5 million into a new international Scottish Environment Centre, which will provide an integrated approach to cutting-edge research, innovation, skills development, inclusion and sustainable growth that tackles global environmental challenges.

The announcement was welcomed by University Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Gerry McCormac, who said:

I welcome today's signing of a City Deal for Stirling and Clackmannanshire, which will bring significant economic benefits.

Investment in world-class research through the City Deal will enable University of Stirling researchers to further tackle some of the world's most pressing problems. By working in partnership, we can unleash our economic potential, delivering a unique source of jobs, growth, and skills development, both for Stirling, and the wider Scottish and UK economies.

Press release: Liverpool at the forefront of justice transformation

The Crown Court is the first in the country to pilot new software that will streamline and speed up hearings, helping to avoid unnecessary delays in the courtroom. The new system is key to delivering a more effective, efficient and high performing courts service as part of the government's reform agenda which allows Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and police files to be shared between agencies in one easy to access database.

In Liverpool, the pilot was established with the close co-operation of Merseyside Police, Mersey Cheshire CPS and HMCTS and lessons learnt during user testing will play a vital part in its wider adoption.

Justice minister Lucy Frazer said:

Liverpool courts have been at the forefront of cutting edge technology to improve efficiency, speed up justice and provide value for money for the taxpayer.

I was delighted to see for myself the progress being made towards the modernisation of our justice system, which will make our courts fit for the digital age.

Minister Frazer spent the day at Liverpool Magistrates and Crown Court, as well as the Civil and Family court where she met court staff and the judiciary, and, in addition to the Common Operating Platform, was able to see a live demonstration of a second digital system designed to record sentences in real time.

Results of 18,000 cases a week are uploaded using the Digital Mark Up, which went live at every magistrates' court across England and Wales in May, and allows a legal advisor to immediately record the outcome of a hearing, ensuring swift justice. This eliminates the need for a lengthy paper process, and means results can be shared immediately with the CPS and police, therefore freeing up staff to concentrate on the most important matters.

The minister also spent time in the Merseyside Centralised Domestic Violence Court – a dedicated court dealing with all cases of domestic abuse at their first hearing in the magistrates' court as swiftly and sensitively as possible, lessening the impact on the victim.

Today's digital demonstrations follow earlier advances in 2015 which saw Liverpool Magistrates' and Crown Courts integrated into a single centre for crime – the first of its scale in England and Wales, and the early adoption of the Digital Case System in the Crown Court. This system enables the judiciary and other parties in Liverpool to prepare, present and share case

papers in a digital format, thereby reducing delays.

The Government is investing £1 billion in reforming and modernising courts, which has already delivered:

- A fully paperless system in conjunction with Transport for London – which means thousands of cases involving fare evasion are dealt with more swiftly and effectively.
- An online system which enables court staff to prepare case files and access them digitally in a courtroom during a hearing – saving 68 million pages of paper.
- The ability for those convicted of minor motoring offences to make their initial plea online. 1500 pleas are dealt with online every week. Court staff and the police automatically receive the completed online plea form as soon as the defendant has submitted it, reducing delays.

In the civil courts people can now:

- Make a small money claim online – with over 3,000 claims issued in the first month, cases moving through more quickly, and user satisfaction over 80% during the pre-launch pilot.
- Apply for a divorce online – which has cut errors in application forms from 40% to less than 1%, saving people time and trouble during a traumatic time.
- Apply for probate online – which has also cut errors, speeds up the process, and has a satisfaction rate of more than 90%.

Press release: Flood risk due to thundery downpours

With further thundery downpours expected today (Thursday) and tomorrow (Friday), the Environment Agency is urging people to check their flood risk – especially if driving or staying in an unfamiliar location over the half term break. Communities in the South West of England are most at risk, including parts of Hampshire, Wiltshire and the West Midlands.

Locally significant surface water flooding impacts are likely from Thursday afternoon and into Friday due to these heavy and slow-moving thunderstorms. There is also risk of flooding from urban rivers and rivers that rise quickly.

The Environment Agency is again warning drivers not to drive through flood water. Driving through floodwater puts the lives of drivers and their passengers on the line, risks the safety of emergency responders, and often causes serious damage to the vehicle, with three-quarters of flood-damaged cars ultimately being written off. The AA rescued more than 14,500 drivers

from floods between 2013 and 2017.

Kate Marks, Environment Agency flood duty manager, said:

Further heavy showers and scattered thunderstorms bring a risk of localised surface water and river flooding on Thursday and Friday. The main risk is for the Western counties of England, with urban areas are most likely to see the impacts of any flash flooding.

Throughout this period of unsettled stormy weather, our teams will continue to work 24/7 operating flood defences, clearing blockages in rivers and streams to ensure they flow freely, and supporting partners responding to any incidents of surface water flooding.

With heavy rain forecast during rush hour, drivers should stay up to date with the latest weather forecast and travel information before making their journey. We remind people not to drive through flood water as just 30cm can move your car. The public can check our active alerts and warnings – which are updated every 15 minutes – online at www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk or by calling 0345 988 1188.

Press release: Chair of the Single Financial Guidance Body appointed

The Department for Work and Pensions has announced that Sir Hector Sants has been appointed as chair of the Single Financial Guidance Body. He will take up the post from 3 October 2018 for a 5 year term.

Work and Pensions Secretary, Esther McVey, said:

Consistent with the Public Appointments Code and following a fair and open competition, I welcome Sir Hector Sants as the first chair of the Single Financial Guidance Body. He will play a pivotal role and lead on improving financial capability across Great Britain.

Sir Hector brings with him vast experience and knowledge from across a range of private and third sector organisations, including how best to support people with problem debt and build wider financial capability. I and my department look forward to working with him.

Sir Hector Sants said:

I am delighted to be appointed chair of the Single Financial Guidance Body. This is an important leadership role with 2 key challenges. In the short-term the dissolution of the 3 existing government sponsored guidance providers and the transition to a single financial guidance body, longer term the new organisation has the opportunity to materially help people better manage their money and in consequence enhance their wellbeing. I look forward to working with the new Board and the executive team to take forward this exciting and important mandate.

More information

Since retiring from full-time work Sir Hector Sants' focus has been on working to help people manage their money as well as circumstances allow, and promoting a fairer financial system which works for everyone. This reflects his belief that being able to manage money well is an essential life skill.

He is currently chairman of StepChange Debt Charity, the UK's biggest debt advice charity. He is also a trustee of Just Finance, a charity which collaborates with the Church of England to promote a fairer financial system, and a member of the UK's Financial Capability Board.

Between 1977 and 2014 he had an executive career in financial services and regulation, which included serving as the CEO of the Financial Services Authority from 2007 to 2012, European CEO of Credit Suisse and a partner of stockbrokers Phillips & Drew.

Remuneration during the set-up phase is £80,000 for a minimum of 21 hours a week. Time commitment will be reviewed once the organisation is in a steady state.

Sir Hector's appointment follows an open and competitive process which was overseen by [The Office for the Commissioner of Public Appointments](#).

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[Speech: Science Minister Sam Gyimah speaks on the importance of international collaboration to research excellence](#)

Good evening. It's good to be in such esteemed company. I'm sure that there will be many interesting discussions this evening on the theme of how international collaboration strengthens research excellence, and I'm looking forward to meeting many of you.

I would like to thank the UK's Permanent Representation in Brussels and Wellcome for working together to bring us all here this evening, and I'm grateful we have Jeremy Farrar with us to talk about Wellcome's approach to international research collaboration. Their work is helping us find solutions to global challenges.

I would also like to thank Jeremy for the paper Wellcome published earlier this year: [Building a Strong Future for European Science: Brexit and Beyond](#), which explored UK-EU links on science and innovation.

Their conclusions were consistent with the findings in the [Lamy report, LAB-FAB-APP](#), published last year, and I feel they helped highlight the importance of strong cross-border relationships to mutual world-class research excellence.

I've been in post as Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation since January. It's a fantastic brief, at an exciting time with plenty of challenges; from domestic issues such as making sure that students

have a strong voice. To making clear what we think is important as part of our relationship in the area of science, research and innovation after we exit the EU.

I value the opportunity of being Minister in this role because of its strategic importance. Science is an area that really matters; that really can make a huge difference to people's lives. We are in the vanguard of such progress and have the opportunity to further knowledge – to build better, faster, cleaner technologies that will have a positive impact on our health, wealth and happiness.

A couple of weeks ago I spoke at an event celebrating UK-Spanish links in nanotechnology. Afterwards I visited the Cambridge Advanced Materials Lab and saw some really incredible science.

I saw technology that will bring the cost of manufacturing LED lighting down significantly, whilst improving its energy efficiency. Bringing affordable, low energy lighting to new markets and, in the UK's case, meaning that we have to build an estimated 10 fewer power stations because of the lower energy consumption.

I learnt about plans for li-fi (Wi-Fi with light!), which will deliver sunlight substitutes for night-workers, who are currently more susceptible to certain types of cancer because lack of exposure to sunlight inhibits their ability to process vitamin D.

And I saw fantastic technologies that provide structures for new tissue growth in our bodies without the risk of rejection by our immune systems.

These researchers from around the world are creating ground-breaking solutions to technical challenges using nanotechnology. And what all of these projects have in common is that they are made possible by international cooperation.

The UK values international cooperation. That is why we will remain a leading power in science and innovation, and why our [Industrial Strategy](#) has a target that 2.4% of our GDP will go to R&D funding by 2027. We are committed to ensuring that this investment leads to real results for everyone.

In her speech last week, the Prime Minister set out the Industrial Strategy's first 4 missions:

- using Artificial Intelligence to improve cancer diagnosis rates, saving 20,000 lives a year by 2033.
- giving people another 5 years of healthy, independent life in their own homes by 2035.
- zero emissions for all new cars by 2040.
- and using new technologies and construction methods to halve the energy usage of new buildings by 2030.

We are also committed to remaining a place for scientists. Our success is built in part on the contribution of researchers and innovators who come to the UK from across the world to study, to research and to do business.

Over half of the UK's researchers come from outside the UK. And, as the Prime Minister said, we will ensure that this does not change.

We have a proud history of being a home, whether temporary or permanent, to researchers. Figures like Srinavasa Ramanujan, Caroline Herschel – even Erasmus spent time in England.

When I visit research institutions, I am told how important it is to have access to the brightest and best talent in the world.

But that's not enough. Science and innovation flows by the exchange of ideas. And I think that we, who make decisions for science, have a duty to do all we can to facilitate this exchange.

We don't do this out of altruism. Supporting science improves people's lives, and innovation creates jobs.

The UK has been an active and valued member of the European Union's Framework Programmes. Participation has been good for us – our researchers and innovators have been able to build projects with partners from across Europe, and beyond. Projects that deliver new knowledge and innovation.

The European Framework Programmes have fostered connections and sparked new ideas. They've built networks that will continue to generate ideas for years into the future.

The European Research Council has supported the very best researchers with long-term grants. Stephen Hawking's final paper was written in collaboration with an ERC grantee.

The Euratom Research and Training programme has pioneered nuclear research for decades. It is pushing the frontiers of knowledge in fusion technology, which could provide virtually unlimited clean energy.

Although we are leaving the EU, it's important to remember that science is an international enterprise and discoveries know no borders. We are all strengthened by our collaborative links.

This is why we want the option of full association to future EU Programmes like [Horizon Europe](#) and Euratom Research and Training. To do this, we need a balanced approach that is mutually beneficial. This means a fair financial contribution, a fair level of influence, and a fair level of access. Last week, we began to talk to the Commission's Task Force 50 about our future science, research and innovation partnership.

It was a positive meeting – and both sides agreed that research and collaboration are important. We will continue to explore various elements of this going forward. But here and now I wanted to unpack a bit what I mean by fair financial contribution influence and access.

Having the option to fully associate allows us to offer the very best of collaboration on science, research and innovation to our EU counterparts. Currently all Member States pay in to the pot to access [Horizon 2020](#) and will continue to do so for Horizon Europe.

Full association would mean a particular amount – of course it's too early in our discussions to put a figure on what this would be but based on existing precedents it would be billions of euros. Anything less than full association and we would need to consider whether this was a fair ask. I am accountable to the UK Parliament and would need to demonstrate that the amount contributed actually is fair.

On fair level of influence, we want to make sure that our voice is heard in discussions. Some of the EU bodies like ERAC and ESFRI and programmes like ETC (European Territorial Cooperation), already allow non-EU Member States to have a say over priorities. That is what we are looking for too.

On fair access – I don't think anyone would give money away for free. So again, I reiterate that our contribution both in terms of financial as well as on science excellence should be taken into account, so our level of access to Programmes is not constrained.

The UK has many excellent and emerging sectors where we partner on the global stage and this is something we are very proud of, cooperation makes us stronger.

As Jeremy will no doubt tell you, we have one of the strongest and most productive life sciences sectors in the world.

Continued collaboration will ensure both the UK and EU get the best deal for patients.

This is why we want to explore the terms on which the UK could remain part of the European Medicines Agency.

We must support our researchers and innovators by working hard to give them access to the people and support they need to continue to produce world class research excellence.