

Innovation heavyweights appointed to lead new Advanced Research and Invention Agency

- Ilan Gur, founder and former CEO of innovation non-profit Activate, appointed to head up the Advanced Research and Invention Agency – the UK's new, independent science funding body
- under Dr Gur's leadership as its first CEO, ARIA will have the freedom to identify and fund transformational science and technology at speed with minimal bureaucracy
- Matt Clifford MBE, co-founder and CEO of Entrepreneur First, appointed as ARIA's first Chairman

The Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng has today appointed Ilan Gur as Chief Executive of the UK's new Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA), to set the agency's agenda, direct its initial funding of high-risk programmes, build an exceptional team of Programme Managers and engage the domestic and international R&D sector.

Today also marks the appointment of talent investor and entrepreneur Matt Clifford as ARIA's Chairman, who will support the work of the CEO as he takes post on 15 August, acting as the steward for ARIA's effective governance.

ARIA will enable exceptional scientists and researchers to identify and fund transformational research that leads to new technologies, discoveries, products and services – helping to maintain the UK's position as a global science superpower and attracting top talent to our shores to grow the economy, boost prosperity and develop the breakthroughs of the future.

Dr Gur built his career managing cutting-edge research and innovation for the benefit of society, predominantly in his role as founder and CEO of non-profit organisation Activate, a US-based organisation which empowers scientists and engineers to bring ground-breaking research to market. Activate has supported 142 fellows and catalysed the creation of over 100 science-based start-ups under Mr Gur's expert leadership.

Dr Gur has also established 2 science-based start-ups, and served in the first generation of Programme Directors at ARPA-E, the US Department of Energy's agency for funding breakthrough innovations in energy technology.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

The appointment of Ilan Gur as ARIA's first CEO is a huge victory for the future of the agency, and for the UK. He has a distinguished track record in translating exceptional talent and ideas into commercial success, and his leadership will ensure the funding of high-risk programmes that will continue to push the

boundaries of science and technology.

Under Dr Gur's leadership and with the support of the brilliant Matt Clifford, ARIA will ensure the benefits of research and development will be felt in our society and economy over the course of generations.

By stripping back unnecessary red tape and putting power in the hands of our innovators, the agency has the freedom to drive forward the technologies of tomorrow.

ARIA has taken inspiration from the successful US-based Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), which was instrumental in creating transformational technologies such as the internet and GPS, changing the way people live and work, while increasing productivity and economic growth.

More recently, ARPA's successor, DARPA, was a vital pre-pandemic funder of mRNA vaccines and antibody therapies, leading to critical COVID-19 therapies.

Incoming ARIA CEO, Ilan Gur said:

I believe that ARIA can deliver the promise of a better future, not just for citizens of the United Kingdom but for the world.

The opportunity to serve as ARIA's founding CEO is a great honour and a great responsibility that I will work tirelessly to fulfil.

The government set out plans to create ARIA in February 2021 to fund high-risk, high-reward scientific research, and maintain the UK's position as a science superpower, with the ARIA Act receiving Royal Assent in February 2022. The Agency is expected to be established later this year.

To support the incoming CEO and Chairman, recruitment campaigns have also been launched today to find ARIA's Non-Executive Directors and the agency's first Chief Financial Officer.

Incoming Chairman of ARIA, Matt Clifford MBE, said:

ARIA has the potential to create a new model for accelerating the scientific and technological breakthroughs that the world needs.

I am honoured to have the opportunity to work with Ilan Gur to guide ARIA through its formative years and ensure its success.

The government has committed to increase public investment in R&D to £20 billion in 2024-2025, with total R&D spending reaching 2.4% of GDP by 2027, and ARIA will be an integral and invaluable addition to the UK's flourishing R&D ecosystem.

It will operate with the agility to fund transformational science, with the pace, freedom and flexibility of a tech start-up and the facilities of the established UK science infrastructure, avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy, and experimenting with different funding models.

Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser said:

The arrival of ARIA will further strengthen the UK research and innovation system. I am excited about the appointment of Ilan Gur and Matt Clifford as the founding CEO and Chair. They will provide the expertise and energy required to make it a success and I am very much looking forward to working with them.

ARIA will play a key role in diversifying the ways in which we back talented people and teams working on truly transformative ideas, wherever and whoever they are. Together we can build the dynamic, creative research and innovation system essential for the UK's prosperity.

- Ilan Gur obtained a PhD in Materials Science and Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley. He is a Schmidt Futures Innovation Fellow, an advisor to the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation in support of the Moore Inventor Fellowship, and a judge for MIT Technology Review's TR35 award
- Matt Clifford MBE is co-founder and CEO of Entrepreneur First, an international investor in technical talent that has helped to build technological companies worth over \$10 billion. Clifford is also co-founder and non-executive director of Code First Girls, has served as a Council Member at Innovate UK, and is a Trustee of the Kennedy Memorial Trust. Before starting Entrepreneur First, Matt worked at McKinsey & Co and earned degrees from the University of Cambridge and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Government seeks views to improve lives of people with Down's syndrome

- People with Down's syndrome, families, professionals and charities are invited to share their experiences and expertise which will be used to shape new guidance
- Life expectancy has increased from 13 to almost 60 within a generation and services are needed to support the more than 40,000 people with Down's syndrome and their families

People with Down's syndrome, their families, professionals and charities are being invited to answer the government's call for evidence to shape new guidance for authorities to follow.

The guidance will help to ensure those with Down's syndrome receive the care and support they need to live longer, happier and healthier lives.

People with Down's syndrome have seen their life expectancy increase from around 13 to almost 60 within a generation so tailored support is required to meet additional health, education, care and housing needs.

Minister for Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan said:

I know with the right support people with Down's syndrome can live full and independent lives.

We need to work together to help organisations better understand how to provide appropriate education, housing and the best possible health and social care support.

It is time for families to stop struggling alone and this guidance will help public authorities to put the right support in place.

The Down Syndrome Act, supported by the government and Dr Liam Fox MP, requires the Health and Social Care Secretary to issue guidance on how to meet the needs of people with Down's syndrome.

Authorities including the NHS, health commissioners and Integrated Care Boards – who will also appoint a named lead to oversee implementation – will then be required to follow the guidance.

People with Down's syndrome are at an increased risk of certain medical conditions – such as congenital heart disease, early onset dementia or hearing and visual impairment. Education and early years support may not always meet needs and can be difficult to access and there is not enough suitable supported housing.

The new guidance will help ensure improved access to the support that people with Down's syndrome need, which can include speech and language therapy, additional educational, housing and care support.

Although legal duties and care frameworks already exist it can be difficult to access services. This guidance will identify what is needed and how it should be delivered.

The call for evidence will also investigate what support is available and what barriers remain with regards to accessing healthcare. In adult social care, questions will focus on the levels of support available to ensure personal care, community engagement and relationships can be maintained.

In housing everyone has the right to try and live as independently as they

wish in their own home so questions will focus on what is needed to make this possible.

In education the call for evidence will link to the wider Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision reforms.

Minister for School Standards, Will Quince said:

It's crucial that our work to improve people's opportunities in this country is based on people's experiences.

I know through my conversations with parents, professionals and children with special educational needs and disabilities, including those with Down's syndrome, how important guidance can be in helping services to improve people's lives.

I encourage anyone with an interest to have their say in this call for evidence, to build on our work improving the SEND system for children and families across the country.

The call for evidence is focused on Down's syndrome but will also test whether the guidance can benefit other people too. Those with a different genetic condition, as well as their families and carers, are invited to contribute.

This call for evidence will run for a period of 16 weeks and is open to everyone.

Government fund to accelerate nuclear fuel supply opens

- £75 million Nuclear Fuel Fund opens to boost production of fuel for reactors
- from today businesses can register their interest in applying for funding, with the scheme opening for applications later this year
- fund will support and create high value jobs and skills in the sector and give businesses the confidence to invest in the UK

Domestic production of nuclear fuel will be driven forward by a £75 million fund opening today (19 July 2022), with the cash boost set to encourage investment and expansion in new nuclear infrastructure while protecting high skilled jobs in the sector.

The [Nuclear Fuel Fund](#) will seek to award grants to projects that can increase

the UK's domestic nuclear fuel sector, reducing the need for foreign imports and creating the material used in nuclear power stations to generate electricity – with funding going towards designing and developing new facilities.

The government backing will encourage private sector co-investment into the projects and ensure the UK builds on its legacy of nuclear fuel innovation and production.

Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

We've got big plans to boost British nuclear power, so it makes perfect sense to ensure we have a strong, resilient, domestic fuel supply chain to match.

This funding will kickstart projects in the UK and generate private investment in facilities that will fuel the nuclear reactors of today and tomorrow, shoring up our energy security while creating jobs.

The government is today asking parties to register their interest in bidding for funding and inviting further information on the sector's investment needs. It is also inviting nuclear stakeholders who are not planning on bidding for the Fund to provide information from their experience that will help to mature fund design ahead of opening the bid window in Autumn 2022.

Today's announcement follows the [British Energy Security Strategy](#) earlier this year, where government set an ambition to approve up to 8 new reactors by 2030, including taking one project to full investment decision (FID) this Parliament and 2 projects to FID in the next Parliament, helping further boost energy independence and move away from costly fossil fuels.

As the UK considers its future nuclear requirements, there may be a greater range of reactor types to draw from. This will see the nuclear fuel sector become even more important. A secure, resilient supply of fuel for domestic reactors will build on this, ensuring they can be called upon to power the economy.

Up to £75 million in grants will be awarded to support the development costs of investments into new nuclear fuel capabilities in the UK, supporting a range of reactor types and sizes, including small and advanced modular reactors.

The Nuclear Fuel Fund will also support companies to access new markets both domestically and internationally, and preserve and create skills and knowhow in parts of the country – with the sector having a large presence in the Northwest.

Transport Secretary more than trebles investment for rail in the north to over £9 billion

- investment in TransPennine route upgrade bolstered by more than 200% to deliver a gold standard rail network to level up the north
- additional funding will be spent on digital signalling technology, electrifying the full route and building additional tracks for passenger and freight services
- this comes as government announces over £950 million for next phase of TransPennine route upgrades, which will deliver better journeys, sooner for passengers in the north

Passengers in the north are set for a major boost as Transport Secretary Grant Shapps more than trebles the investment for TransPennine route upgrades (TRU), slashing journey times, setting the foundations for Northern PowerHouse Rail and reducing carbon emissions by up to 87,000 tonnes per year.

The increase in funding, from £2.9 billion to more than £9 billion, is set to strengthen TRU and Northern Powerhouse Rail, transforming an already ambitious project to a 'gold standard' and delivering on the government's priority of Levelling Up the country.

The full route will be fitted with the latest technology, from complete electrification and full digital signalling, to increased capacity along the route for passenger and freight services between Huddersfield and Westtown in Dewsbury, doubling tracks from 2 to 4.

A further £959 million of funding has been released to progress the next phase of TRU between Manchester and York. The almost £1 billion will be spent on the remaining electrification of the railway between Stalybridge and Manchester and unlocking shorter journey times and trans-Pennine rail freight flows, with electric trains between Manchester and Stalybridge expected to hit the tracks around the middle of the decade.

Funding will also facilitate Northern Powerhouse Rail potentially doubling the amount of direct construction jobs from 2,000 to up to 4,000, taking thousands of lorries off our roads and delivering better journeys, sooner for passengers across the north.

Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps said:

Through our record-breaking [integrated rail plan](#), we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to redesign the railways and it's only right that we deliver this in line with the best quality technology at our disposal.

By trebling the overall investment in the TRU, I'm ensuring the north is at the forefront of the government's Levelling Up agenda and guaranteeing passengers gold standard services set to deliver greener, faster and reliable services through Northern Powerhouse Rail, electrification and additional train tracks.

Once complete, the TRU is expected to deliver multiple benefits, delivering an extra 2 passenger trains every hour and additional hourly freight slots. Upgrades are expected to service more reliable journeys and slash journey times by up to 40%. Northern Powerhouse Rail will be fully electrified, improving the local environment and air quality across the north.

The [TransPennine route upgrade, announced in November 2021 as part of the integrated rail plan](#), will be hitting the tracks from 2025 – boosting economic growth and creating local skilled jobs.

[Ambassador Nick Whittingham strengthens ties with Honduras](#)

World news story

British Ambassador to Honduras, Nick Whittingham, will conduct a three-day agenda to advance prosperity, human rights and climate awareness in Honduras.



Ambassador Whittingham will engage with government officials, civil society and private sector representatives from 18-20 July on actionable strategies and opportunities to strength the UK-Honduras relationship.

The Ambassador's priorities include continue working closely with Honduras in condemning Russia's ongoing, brutal aggression against Ukraine, which is also generating devastating impacts on energy and food prices worldwide. The UK commends Honduras' international engagement to end the war.

Ambassador Whittingham will also explore opportunities to advance human rights, freedom of the press and transparency. The UK welcomes Honduras' plans to strengthening the battle against corruption, and President's Castro commitment to protect the rights of vulnerable minorities.

In order to foster prosperity and investments, Ambassador Whittingham will stress the need to seize opportunities of the UK-Central America Association Agreement, while urging Honduras to continue improving the rule of law, the business environment and fiscal discipline.

Finally, Ambassador Whittingham will discuss the UK's Biodiverse Landscapes Fund, a US\$20 million project that will help Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Belize to protect biodiversity, reduce poverty and tackle the impacts of climate change. In Honduras, the fund would work in the tri-national zone of El Trifinio and La Mosquitia.

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