

Press release: British success stories Wallace & Gromit and Peaky Blinders to feature in next generation entertainment experiences

- Government backing for new projects by Oscar and BAFTA winning companies putting users in the thick of the action
- investment will put UK creative industries “at the cutting edge” of latest virtual and augmented reality technologies
- modern Industrial Strategy in action to ensure home-grown talent remains world-leading for the next generation

The brains behind British success stories Wallace & Gromit, and Peaky Blinders, are joining ambitious new projects led by industry leaders in the games and immersive entertainment sectors to blaze a trail into the world of virtual and augmented reality entertainment – backed by millions of pounds of government investment.

Award winning Aardman, the brains behind Wallace & Gromit, are part of a consortia with developers Tiny Rebel Games, digital specialists Potato, creative agency Sugar Creative and the University of South Wales. Together, they will build on successes of Academy Award-winning films including The Wrong Trousers and A Close Shave by taking the characters into the future of storytelling.

The consortia will be benefiting from £4 million investment to develop new immersive storytelling experience based on their famous creations which will put fans right at the heart of the action, enabling people to join adventures with Wallace & Gromit, looking in any direction, and see and feel part of the action.

A further project is a new virtual reality drama game based on BAFTA-award winning Peaky Blinders using Artificial Intelligence technology: launching in 2020, it will mean that for the first time, characters will respond according to the players’ gestures, movement, voice, sound and body language. The project is being led by London-based immersive VR studio, Maze Theory.

Thanks to creations like Peaky Blinders and Wallace & Gromit, the UK’s creative industries reached a combined value of over £100 billion in 2017.

Through its modern Industrial Strategy, the government is investing £33 million to ensure the UK’s immersive technology industry cements its place as a world-leader in film, TV and game productions for the future, remaining at the cutting edge of the latest technologies and creating thousands of highly-skilled jobs.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

Success stories like award-winning Wallace & Gromit and BAFTA-winning Peaky Blinders are part of the reason why our creative industries are truly world-leading – attracting audiences both here in the UK and internationally and helping create a sector already worth some £100 billion to our economy.

It's why through our modern Industrial Strategy we're investing to build on this huge global demand for UK creative content and ensure we lead the world in the next generation of entertainment.

This backing will also give our home-grown talent the opportunity to lead the way in creating and using virtual and augmented reality technologies, remain at the cutting edge and create thousands of highly-skilled jobs.

Aardman and the consortium are behind one of the 21 projects benefiting from government investment in the creative industries – receiving a share of £12 million of the £33 million Ministers have made available.

Other projects that the government is investing in include:

- Improving theatre experiences for a more diverse audience, including personalised sign-language displays for British Sign Language (BSL) users, translation captions for non-English speakers and audio descriptions for visually impaired people. The project led by the National Theatre will research the technical and production means to deliver these initiatives to improve accessibility.
- Making it possible for people to meet their heroes, with personalised storytelling and conversation through virtual reality. Forever Holdings will bring together a research group to transform these immersive encounters, by improving filming techniques and boosting voice interaction.
- Offering businesses immersive learning solutions for employees where they can use virtual and mixed reality headsets to learn at their own pace and repeat tasks as often as required. Holohub would make this platform available to businesses for them to distribute it to staff and track performance.

Creative Industries Minister Margot James said:

The £150 million Creative Industries Sector Deal is helping to drive forward our modern Industrial Strategy and maintain the UK as a world leading destination for creative talent.

Immersive technology is changing the way in which we consume entertainment, and the Audience of the Future programme will demonstrate how we can take people closer to the action than ever before.

UKRI Challenge Director for Audience of the Future, Prof Andrew Chitty said:

It's fantastic that we complete our line-up of audience facing demonstrators with this hugely ambitious collaboration between Tiny Rebel Games, Potato, Sugar and the creators of Wallace and Gromit.

Their aim to revolutionise Augmented Reality gaming along with the advances in AI, haptics, audience interaction and film production technologies from our other competition winners means the public will be able to try out some truly ground breaking experiences over the next 18 months.

The announcement comes on World Intellectual Property Day which celebrates IP rich industries in economies around the world.

The Creative Industries Council (CIC) which negotiated the Creative Industries Sector Deal on behalf of the sector is also welcoming 8 new members as part of a review to ensure the Council is fully representative of the UK's world leading Creative Industries. New members include Alex Mahon of Channel 4, Kanya King from MOBO and Debbie Bestwick from Team 17.

- For more information and updates on the programme please see www.ukri.org/audience-future
- The programme aims to pioneer immersive experiences across the creative industries and was announced in March 2018 in the Creative Industries Sector Deal. It is anticipated that the Audience of the Future Challenge could lead to a significant boost of immersive content in the UK, cementing the UK's position as a dominant market leader in the creative immersive sector.

Industrial Strategy

[The Industrial Strategy](#) sets out a long term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people throughout the UK. It sets out how we are building a Britain fit for the future – how we will help businesses create better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the UK with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure.

Creative Industries Sector Deal

Since launching the [Creative Industries Sector Deal](#) in March 2018, key commitments have been delivered:

- The Creative Industries Council (CIC) which negotiated the Creative Industries Sector Deal on behalf of the sector is welcoming 8 new members as part of a review to ensure the Council is fully representative of the UK's world leading Creative Industries. New members include Alex Mahon (Channel 4), Kanya King (MOBO), Debbie Bestwick (Team 17), Annette King (Publicis UK), Stephen Page (Faber and Faber), Lee Brooks (Production Park), Michael Dugher (UK Music), and Andrew Thompson (AHRC).
- All individual demonstrator projects from the Audience of the Future challenge have now been announced, enabling creative businesses to

harness the power of immersive technologies to create content, products and services, with companies creating the next generation of entertainment for people around the country.

- The £39 million Creative Industries Clusters Programme has been launched, and nine new R&D partnerships around the UK have been established: Dundee, Edinburgh, Belfast, Yorkshire, Leeds, Cardiff, Bath/Bristol and two in London.
- The £20 million Cultural Development Fund is supporting creative clusters in Wakefield, Grimsby, Plymouth, Worcester and the Thames Estuary area. The clusters will invest in creative, cultural and heritage initiatives that will lead to economic growth and productivity.
- The Creative Local Industry Partnership scheme has been established, which meets regularly and convenes leading industry bodies such as the Creative Industries Federation, Creative Industries Council, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Combined Authorities and partners in the Devolved Nations.
- A Creative Industries Trade and Investment Board has been established, targeting a 50% increase in creative industries exports by 2023.
- The Creative Careers Programme has been launched, which aims to ensure there is a larger and more diverse intake of talent and a broader range of routes into the creative industries.
- Investment of £2 million has been committed over three years in the Get it Right campaign that educates consumers on the dangers of copyright infringement and direct them towards legitimate sources of creative content online.
- A £4 million Creative Scale Up investment readiness programme has been launched, aimed at increasing the profitability, scalability and productivity of creative industries businesses by supporting scale-up firms so they are better placed to access finance.
- The Creative Industries Council has recently recast its membership to better support delivery of the commitments in the Sector Deal.

UK Research and Innovation

UKRI is a new body which works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities, and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish. We aim to maximise the contribution of each of our component parts, working individually and collectively. We work with our many partners to benefit everyone through knowledge, talent and ideas. Operating across the whole of the UK with a combined budget of more than £7 billion, UK Research and Innovation brings together the Arts and Humanities Research Council; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council; Economic and Social Research Council; Innovate UK; Medical Research Council; Natural Environment Research Council; Research England; and Science and Technology Facilities Council.

Press release: Minimum wage underpayment on the rise, Low Pay Commission finds

In April 2018 439,000 people were paid less than the hourly minimum wage they are entitled to, a new report from the Low Pay Commission (LPC) finds. Of these, 369,000 were workers aged 25 and over paid less than the National Living Wage (NLW): this equates to 23% of those paid at or below the rate. This is an increase of around 30,000 on the previous year's level of underpayment of the NLW, or a 2 percentage point rise in the share of workers entitled to the rate. 135,000 people were paid below £7.20 per hour (the 2016 introductory NLW rate). These estimates are subject to several caveats (see notes 1-3 below) but are consistent with a trend of increasing underpayment since the introduction of the NLW in 2016.

LPC Chair Bryan Sanderson said:

Our analysis reveals that a worrying number of people are being paid less than the minimum wage. We recently celebrated 20 years of the minimum wage – it has raised pay for millions of workers, but it is essential that people receive what they are entitled to. It is also vital for businesses to be able to operate on a level playing field and not be illegally undercut on wages.

The Government has made real progress with its enforcement of the minimum wage, but more needs to be done to ensure employers comply in the first place and workers know how to enforce their rights.

The LPC's new report looks at the most up to date statistical evidence on the extent of non-compliance with the minimum wage and uses evidence from stakeholders and the Government to reflect on the policy responses to non-compliance.

Women are more likely than men to be paid less than the minimum wage. Underpayment is also higher for the youngest and oldest workers. The largest numbers of underpaid individuals work in hospitality, retail and cleaning and maintenance; childcare is the occupation with the highest proportion of underpaid workers.

Enforcement of the minimum wage by HM Revenue and Customs has benefited from increased funding, with a record number of workers identified as underpaid, arrears repaid, and fines levied on non-compliant employers in 2017/18. But other important measures – for example, the numbers of cases opened and closed – stood still, and the overall figures were driven by a relatively small number of cases. The LPC welcomes the Government's continued focus on minimum wage enforcement, but we note the continuing challenge in making sure

resources are targeted as effectively as possible.

The LPC recommends that the Government continues to invest strongly in communications to both workers and employers around minimum wage compliance and enforcement. The report makes specific recommendations around information for workers and trade unions, guidance for employers and publicity around the enforcement regime.

Measuring the full extent of minimum wage non-compliance remains a significant challenge. The LPC urges the Government to use all available opportunities to improve the measurement of underpayment, and to investigate new methodologies for assessing the scale of non-compliance.

Notes:

1. The estimate of 439,000 workers paid less than the minimum wage is derived from analysis of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). It is not a true estimate of non-compliance for a number of reasons. Some cases of underpayment can be legitimate: for example, because of the Accommodation Offset; commission and bonuses; piece rates; and because the data may fail to identify workers as apprentices.
2. Equally, some underpayment – for example, resulting from deductions to pay through salary sacrifice – will not be shown in ASHE. In addition, employers who are knowingly non-compliant are unlikely to admit this in the survey. And importantly when discussing estimates of underpayment, ASHE is unlikely to include data on the informal economy, where we would expect to find a large share of non-compliance.
3. Analysis of Labour Force Survey (LFS) data also shows an increase in underpayment. This is an unreliable measure of absolute levels of minimum wage pay or non-compliance but does show the pattern of underpayment across the year. Nevertheless, LFS measures of underpayment were higher in 2018 than previous years, and did not fall by as much over the 6 months following the minimum wage uprating.
4. Chart data available on request.
5. The National Living Wage is the statutory minimum wage for workers aged 25 and over. It was introduced in April 2016 and has a target of 60% of median earnings by 2020, subject to sustained economic growth.
6. Different minimum wage rates apply to 21-24 year olds, 18-20 year olds, 16-17 year olds and apprentices aged under 19 or in the first year of an apprenticeship. Rates for workers aged under 25, and apprentices, are lower than the NLW to reflect lower average earnings and higher unemployment rates. International evidence also suggests that younger workers are more exposed to employment risks arising from the pay floor than older workers. Unlike the NLW (where the possibility of some consequences for employment have been accepted by the Government), the LPC's remit requires us to set the rates for younger workers and apprentices as high as possible without causing damage to jobs and hours.
7. The Accommodation Offset is an allowable deduction from wages for accommodation, applicable for each day of the week. In April 2019 it will increase to £7.55 per day.
8. The National Living Wage is different from the UK Living Wage and the

London Living Wage. Differences include that: the UK Living Wage and the London Living Wage are voluntary pay benchmarks that employers can sign up to if they wish, not legally binding requirements; the hourly rate of the UK Living Wage and London Living Wage is based on an attempt to measure need, whereas the National Living Wage is based on a target relationship between its level and average pay; the UK Living Wage and London Living Wage apply to workers aged 18 and over, the National Living Wage to workers aged 25 and over. The Low Pay Commission has no role in the UK Living Wage or the London Living Wage.

9. The Low Pay Commission is an independent body made up of employers, trade unions and experts whose role is to advise the Government on the minimum wage. The rate recommendations contained in the 2018 Report were agreed unanimously by the Commission.

10. The nine Low Pay Commissioners are:

- Bryan Sanderson (Chair)
- Professor Sarah Brown
- Professor Richard Dickens
- Kate Bell
- Kay Carberry
- Simon Sapper
- Neil Carberry
- Clare Chapman
- Martin McTague

National Minimum Wage rates

Minimum wage rate	Rate 1 April 2018-31 March 2019	Rate from 1 April 2019
National Living Wage	£7.83	£8.21
21-24 Year Old Rate	£7.38	£7.70
18-20 Year Old Rate	£5.90	£6.15
16-17 Year Old Rate	£4.20	£4.35
Apprentice Rate	£3.70	£3.90
Accommodation Offset	£7.00	£7.55

[Press release: General licences: next steps to apply online](#)

Natural England has been working urgently to identify alternative solutions for all those affected by [the decision on Tuesday](#) (23 April) to revoke three general licences for controlling certain wild birds.

The decision to revoke these licences was not taken lightly. Natural England explored all other options available, but was left with no choice but to revoke the licences in order to comply with the law.

General licences will be restored as quickly as possible, starting with those species that are most likely to require urgent control. This will mean landowners can continue to take necessary action as they do now, whilst also taking into account the needs of wildlife. Natural England is working closely with farmers, pest controllers, gamekeepers and other professionals working in the countryside to ensure everyone who needs to control pests can.

In the interim, before these general licences are available, where there is no reasonable non-lethal alternative, there is a simple and quick online application system to obtain individual licences to control wild birds. These are [accessible now](#). Natural England recognises that there may be instances of genuine emergency where immediate action may be required.

Natural England is working at pace to get the new licensing regime up and running, so users can be sure that they are acting within the law. They will consult with stakeholders in advance of the wider review of general licensing that will take place later this year.

Natural England's interim chief executive Marian Spain said:

I recognise, as does my team at Natural England, that these interim measures will cause disruption for licence users. We are working hard to ensure it is kept to a minimum. This is not a ban on control, it is a change to the licences that allow control to take place.

We have been very clear there will be new licences in place in the coming days that cover the vast majority of circumstances covered by the current licences. This will ensure landowners can continue to take necessary action, whilst also taking into account the needs of wildlife.

Anybody who needs to act within the law before these are ready can rely on a simple online application system for individual licences, which is now available through GOV.UK.

What to do if you use a general licence

It is expected that, over time, most situations currently covered by the three general licences will be covered by new licences.

Natural England is undertaking new licensing assessments to support lethal control of certain birds in defined situations, such as to prevent serious damage to livestock from carrion crow and to preserve public health and safety from the impacts of feral pigeons. It intends to start issuing these licences on GOV.UK from 26 April. It will also publish a timetable then to show which licences will be available when.

If people need to take action in the meantime they will need to apply for an individual licence, using a simplified process which will be available on GOV.UK from 25 April.

Background on the general licences

General licences were introduced in the 1990s to allow the legal control of bird species of low conservation concern to protect public health and safety, prevent serious damage and disease, and protect plants and wildlife.

Further details of the wider review into the operation and provision of general licences will be shared shortly. We will seek feedback from those using them and from wildlife protection and other groups. We expect to complete this review by the end of the year.

Part of Natural England's role is to ensure relevant provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are upheld to protect wildlife, as well as recognising the needs of people

Background

Currently the three licences subject to the legal challenge cover 16 bird species, including several members of the crow family (crows, magpies, rooks, jackdaws and jays), feral and wood pigeon and number of invasive non-native species (such as Canada goose).

The specific licences:

- General licence GL04: To kill or take certain species of wild birds to prevent serious damage or disease
- General licence GL05: To kill or take certain species of wild birds to preserve public health or public safety
- General licence GL06: To kill or take certain species of wild birds to conserve wild birds or flora or fauna

Speech: Russia's aggressive tactics in the face of Ukraine's work towards peace and democracy

Thank you, President.

Mr President, it's important that Ukraine is regularly discussed here in this Council. Ursula Mueller told us that the leading cause of death of children in Ukraine is from landmines and that is a grim reminder of the real impact of this ongoing conflict, as also set out by our briefers from the OSCE.

Thirteen thousand people have died. Thirty thousand have been injured. Three and a half million are in need of humanitarian aid in this modern conflict in Europe.

Mr President, why are we here? We are here because Russia sent troops to Crimea and later grabbed it after an illegitimate pretence of a referendum, held at the barrel of the Russian gun. Russia's actions were clearly illegal. One hundred Member States agreed in a GA resolution in March 2014 and not one country around this table voted with Russia. Russia sent troops and supported separatists in eastern Ukraine and continues to destabilise those regions with devastating humanitarian consequences. Russia attacked Ukrainian ships in the Sea of Azov last year and continues to impose daily restrictions on vessels in a blatant attempt to destabilise Ukraine's economy. All those who care about the territorial integrity of Member States and the principle of non-interference should ask Moscow to stop interfering in its neighbour and to get off its territory. We therefore condemn President Putin's recent decision on passports, which is further evidence of Russia's aggressive actions to destabilise Ukraine and undermine a security sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Rather than creating further obstacles to the reintegration of these communities into Ukraine, Russia should focus on implementing the Minsk Agreements, endorsed by this Council, on ending its support for armed separatist formations and on ensuring the safe delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance by international agencies. This is the only way to end the fear and suffering of ordinary people in eastern Ukraine.

Mr President, last month was the fifth anniversary of the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia. Apart from the illegal seizure of Ukrainian land, infrastructure and economic assets, the Russian authorities have run illegitimate elections and imposed Russian citizenship, Russian law and military conscription on the population in this part of Ukraine. We've seen an increase in the persecution of ethnic and religious groups, such as the Crimean Tatars, including the unlawful detention of 23 Crimeans following recent raids on their homes. There are continuing reports of arbitrary detentions and arrests and forced disappearances and torture against political opponents and minorities. Seventy three political prisoners are currently being held in Crimea and in Russia. It is unacceptable that the Russian Federation has not cooperated with calls by the UN General Assembly to allow access for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Mr President, I would like to extend my congratulations to Volodymyr Zelensky on his Presidential election success. The peaceful election process is a testament to the development of Ukraine's democracy and an example to some of Ukraine's neighbours. As my Prime Minister stated, we look forward to working with Mr Zelensky. The Russian Federation have an opportunity to show willingness to work with the new President and to reduce tensions, to bring calm, to work for peace. Sadly, instead, Russia has continued down its aggressive path.

Thank you, Mr President.

Press release: Scottish Secretary visits site of new UK Government Edinburgh hub

The new Hub, located near Waverley Station, will bring together nearly 3,000 UK Government civil servants from a range of departments, including the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Office of the Advocate General for Scotland, HMRC, the Office for Statistics Regulation, the Information Commissioner's Office, the Government Actuary's Department and HM Treasury.

Due to open in 2020, the Hub will improve the work of the UK Government in Scotland, enabling closer collaboration between departments and helping them deliver better services for Scottish people.

Mr Mundell said:

Work is progressing well on the new UK Government Hub in the centre of Edinburgh. The space will bring together some 3,000 UK Government civil servants, helping them deliver high quality services for people across Scotland.

The Edinburgh Hub is a great example of the UK Government's extensive support for the capital's economy – which we are also driving through the ambitious Edinburgh and South East Scotland Growth Deal.

The Edinburgh Hub will open during 2020. Work is also underway on a Glasgow Hub. The Edinburgh and Glasgow Hubs are a key part of the UK Government's commitment to delivering excellent public services for people in Scotland, and building a strong Civil Service outside London. Across the UK it is estimated that the UK Government Hubs programme will save more than £2 billion of public money over twenty years, relocating civil servants from existing, often fragmented office locations, to modern, cross-departmental workplaces.