

## **News story: Defence simulation training – deadline approaching for innovative ideas**

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) has committed around £400,000 so far to innovation in the areas of training and education efficiency and effectiveness challenge, and the modelling and simulation representation of the future operating environment.

DASA Open Call Competition Lead Gabriella Cox stated:

These two focus areas were only opened last year, and we are delighted to have been able to fund multiple proposals from across the UK, a number of which are micro or small enterprises.

There are a few weeks left to submit to the focus areas to help the Armed Forces have highly trained and educated personnel to meet the demands that the country places on them. For the first focus area, credible methods to improve training and education efficiency and effectiveness are being sought, with ways to allow for continuous improvement in training and education delivery.

The second focus area is looking for ways to understand and demonstrate the role of modelling and simulation in representing complex and rapidly changing environments, to support delivery of training and education for service personnel. Areas of interest include future systems and concepts and autonomous systems.

Full details are available [on our website](#)

The closing date to submit your innovation to these focus areas is 7 March 2019.

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## **Press release: Artificial intelligence to tackle insurance fraud and assess flood damage**

- Businesses and customers to benefit from 40 new artificial intelligence and data analytics projects to increase productivity and improve customer service in professional services sector

- Projects include an online “bot” for quick legal advice, voice recognition technology to detect fraudulent insurance claims, and artificial intelligence to review business expenditure
- Part of the Industrial Strategy ‘Next Generation’ Challenge Fund to ensure UK professional services remain world-leading

A project to develop breakthrough artificial intelligence technology for the anti-fraud sector is one of a number of new projects set to receive funding to enable the UK accountancy, insurance and legal services industries to transform how they operate.

The artificial intelligence software, being developed by Intelligent Voice Ltd, Strenuus Ltd. and the University of East London will combine AI and voice recognition technology to detect and interpret emotion and linguistics to assess the credibility of insurance claims. Insurance fraud cost the UK £3 billion in 2017, equating to £10,400 per fraudulent claim, and costing consumers an extra £50 per policy.

The project is one of 40 backed by £13 million in Government investment to support collaborative industry and research projects to develop the next-generation of professional services.

Other examples include:

- an online “bot” which will use artificial intelligence to provide quick answers to legal questions online
- an analysis tool which looks at images collected by drones to assess flood-damaged areas, using a 3D image recognition system to evaluate flood extent and depth alongside impacts on buildings and infrastructure to help with insurance claim assessments
- artificial intelligence software that will analyse accounting data and suggest ways for businesses to cut expenditure, suggesting new deals on gas, water and electricity bills

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

Artificial intelligence and data are transforming industries across the world. We are combining our unique heritage in AI with our world beating professional services to put the UK at the forefront of these cutting-edge technologies and their application.

We want to ensure businesses and consumers benefit from the application of AI – from providing quicker access to legal advice for customers, to tackling fraudulent insurance claims, these projects illustrate our modern Industrial Strategy in action. We’re investing record levels in research and development so that every part of the UK can benefit from the industries and high-skilled jobs of the future.

The projects announced today back innovation in the accountancy, insurance

and legal services and are part of the [Next Generation Services](#) Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund. This is a £20 million fund, administered by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), to support the development and adoption of AI and Data technologies that will transform the UK's services industries.

UK Research and Innovation Chief Executive, Professor Sir Mark Walport, said:

The service industry around the world is being transformed by information technology. The Next Generation Services Challenge offers important opportunities for transformation of the legal, insurance and accountancy sectors across the UK.

Through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund we are building on UK expertise in artificial intelligence and data science to deliver benefits that will be felt in the services sector and beyond.

The Government's modern Industrial Strategy commits to placing the UK at the forefront of the sectors and technologies of the future. The research and development projects will begin work from this month and could see initiatives rolled out in the industries by 2020/21.

Awards were made across 2 competitions:

- £6 million is awarded across four large collaborative projects addressing sector-wide challenges across supply chains or regulators
- £7 million is awarded across 36 smaller projects looking specifically at applying AI and data techniques

## **UK Research and Innovation**

UK Research and Innovation 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.

## **The AI and Data Grand Challenge**

The Industrial Strategy sets out Grand Challenges to put the UK at the forefront of the industries of the future, ensuring that the UK takes advantage of major global changes, improving people's lives and the country's productivity. Artificial intelligence and data is one of the four Grand

Challenges which will see AI used across a variety of industries and put the UK at the forefront of the AI and data revolution.

- this announcement builds on reviews that BEIS has undertaken with the InsurTech (insurance technology) and LawTech (legal technology) emerging sectors, in partnership with Treasury and the Ministry of Justice.
- BEIS has worked closely with innovative businesses to understand their barriers to growth. This has led to government supporting Tech Nation to set up and establish the InsurTech Board, which convenes leading start-ups, market bodies and established insurers to devise industry-led initiatives that reinforce the UK's position as the world leading insurance and reinsurance market.
- the Lord Chancellor announced the new LawTech Delivery Panel chaired by Law Society President Christina Blacklaws, which will provide direction to the legal sector and help foster an environment in which new technology can thrive. The Government recognises the importance of embracing cutting-edge initiatives to ensure the UK's £24billion legal services sector continues to grow and retain its world-leading reputation.
- in 2017, HMT established the Fintech Delivery Panel, an industry forum tasked with driving forward industry-led initiatives, and actively supports other groups championing the cause of UK Fintech.

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## [Press release: Partnership tree planting in Nottinghamshire](#)

The green-fingered team has been spending the day planting native trees in fields near Lambley and Lowdham to support a £1million Natural Flood Management (NFM) scheme. The project aims to use a mixture of oak, alder, cherry and hawthorn trees to naturally slow the flow of surface water in times of flood, reducing the amount of water entering the Cocker Beck.

Today's activities are just part of a £15million national NFM programme which, in addition to reducing flood risk and enhancing the environment, aims to contribute to the growing evidence base for NFM as a tool to reduce flood risk.

Work on the ground started in November 2018 and will continue across 15 sites upstream of Lowdham.

Measures include constructing 'leaky' wooden barriers to help reduce the amount of water that enters the Cocker Beck. The barriers slow and store water within the existing ditch network, reducing the rate it travels to the downstream communities. They will also help to trap sediment to improve water quality downstream.

The project runs until March 2021, with partners from the Environment Agency, Trent Rivers Trust and Nottinghamshire County Council monitoring how effective the NFM features are. It is hoped it will complement a wider flood management scheme in Lowdham.

Environment Agency area flood and coastal risk manager, Paul Lockhart, said:

We're delighted to have secured a Natural Flood Management scheme with our partners, Trent Rivers Trust and Nottinghamshire County Council. This scheme will allow us to manage flood risk using innovative solutions that are sustainable and cost-effective and, as part of the project, we will be looking at how the measures are contributing to flood risk reduction.

## **Notes for editors**

Natural Flood Management emulates natural processes by slowing the flow of and storing water, with the aim of reducing flood flows. This can complement and also mean less reliance on the use of more traditional 'hard-engineering' at locations where communities are affected. Techniques such as tree-planting, restoring peatland, building 'leaky' wooden barriers and re-connecting rivers to natural flood plains can all be used to reduce flood risk naturally.

The villages of Lowdham and Lambley in Nottinghamshire experience flooding from the Cocker Beck when it overtops the bank during periods of heavy rain. The surrounding catchment is steeply sloping, with run-off from fields exacerbating the issue. As well as affecting local residents, flood water can also impact upon local infrastructure, cutting off roads and access to the villages.

At selected locations, ponds and scrapes will be dug into the floodplain to increase the amount of water that can be stored there. This will also provide a habitat for wildlife, particularly invertebrates. Trees will be planted in areas to intercept run off. As they grow, they will take up some of the water, create routes down into the soil for the water to infiltrate, and provide important habitat.

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# News story: Transport Secretary announces £22 million investment in Plymouth link road

- more than £22 million funding put towards the total cost of the Forder Valley Link Road
- new road will cut journey times from the east of the Plymouth to the north
- government publishes Investing in the South West detailing £2 billion of funding to support growth and prosperity

Drivers and cyclists will benefit from quicker journeys across Plymouth thanks to a multimillion pound investment announced by the Transport Secretary.

Chris Grayling has revealed today (15 February 2019) that more than £22 million will be put towards the Forder Valley Link Road, which will help support the city's economic prosperity and lead to wider benefits.

The new road will also unlock land in the north of the city for development, where 4,300 homes are planned over the next 15 years, and it will include new walking and cycling routes while improving bus connectivity from the east.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

This exciting scheme will provide vital extra capacity on Plymouth's road network and help cut journey times, while also promoting the use of public transport through better bus routes from the east.

This investment is part of our cast-iron commitment to deliver resilient transport across the south-west, building on our ambitious plans to boost the region's economy through stronger travel connections.

The new 1 kilometre (0.6 mile) road will create an additional route from the east of Plymouth to the north, avoiding the often heavily congested Manadon Roundabout and A386 Tavistock Road. It will link Forder Valley Road and Novorossiysk Road to William Prance Road in Derriford.

Work will start in April (2019) and is expected to be complete within 3 years.

Today's announcement was made as the Transport Secretary visited the south-west, meeting with local businesses, to discuss how government investment is focused on giving people across the region the modern, reliable services they

deserve.

An extensive programme of investment in the south-west to transform connectivity throughout the region has been outlined in the [‘Investing in the South West’ report](#).

This includes schemes totalling more than £2 billion, improving the strategic road network, high-speed direct bus connectivity, safe and continuous cycle routes and easier transfer between transport modes.

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## [News story: CMA welcomes court ruling to uphold fine in steel tanks case](#)

In December 2016, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) fined Balmoral, a supplier of steel water tanks, £130,000 for taking part in an exchange of competitively-sensitive information on prices and pricing intentions with 3 other competitors. The exchange took place at a single meeting in July 2012 at which Balmoral was invited to join a long-running cartel to allocate customers and fix prices. Balmoral refused to take part in the customer allocation and price-fixing cartel, but exchanged competitively-sensitive information with its competitors. That meeting was secretly recorded by the CMA.

In October 2017, the Competition Appeal Tribunal upheld the CMA’s fine on Balmoral, in a judgment which highlighted the risks for businesses tempted to share information with competitors. Balmoral had sought to challenge the Competition Appeal Tribunal’s ruling that the discussions breached competition law and its decision to uphold the penalty imposed. The Court of Appeal today dismissed the challenge in its entirety, and fully upheld the CMA’s decision.

The CMA’s Executive Director of Enforcement, Michael Grenfell, commented:

This important judgment from the Court of Appeal sends a clear and unequivocal message, not just in this sector but to all businesses across the UK. If companies exchange competitively-sensitive, confidential information – even at just one meeting – that is itself a breach of competition law.

The CMA is committed to using the full range of its powers to crack down on such illegal behaviour, which includes issuing fines.

Further details are available on the [case page](#).