[News story: Scaling up materials & manufacture: apply for an innovation loan]

Engineers in a busy workshop.

Up to £10 million in innovation loans is available to UK small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to scale up and commercialise innovative manufacturing processes and materials development.

Innovation loans will be made through Innovate UK Loans Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Innovate UK.

Manufacturing and commercial readiness

The loan competition aims to help SMEs progress their innovative manufacturing and materials projects and achieve manufacturing and commercial readiness.

By commercial readiness we mean:

- the capability to produce prototype products or systems at a commercially viable rate or scale
- evidence that a business is financeable and has significant market potential
- the ability of a business to market and sell its products, processes or services

Projects should focus on a late-stage manufacturing or materials innovation rather than be at the product level. They may include (but are not restricted to):

- creation of new or improved manufacturing facilities, equipment and systems
- development of software
- development of new business models
- materials testing

It is open to all manufacturing sectors.

Innovation loans for late-stage projects

This is the second loan competition offered under Innovate UK’s pilot programme.

Recognising that innovations need different types of funding support, Innovate UK’s pilot is a patient, flexible loan scheme for projects that are nearer to market, where there tends to be less risk involved.

It will make available up to £50 million over 2 years to the end of 2019.

Loan competition details

- the loan competition opens on 26 February, and the deadline for registration is at midday on 25 April 2018
- innovation loans can range between £100,000 and £1 million, and projects last up to 5 years. They are for late-stage experimental development only
- you could get an innovation loan of up to 100% of your eligible project costs
- only single, UK-based SMEs may apply
- briefing events will run across the UK during March 2018

News story: Farm inspection review announced

The review, to be led by Dame Glenys Stacey, will look at opportunities for improving regulation and enforcement pre and post EU Exit, seek out ways to reduce duplication and allow farmers to concentrate on upholding key environmental and animal welfare standards as they produce fantastic British food.

For example, the current inspection regime can result in farmers being visited by as many as five different bodies – the Rural Payments Agency, Natural England, the Animal Plant and Health Agency, the Environment Agency or their local authority – all asking for similar information.

Each visit adds to the burden on farmers, and rigidity of the Common Agriculture Policy rules require inspections of precise criteria such as field margin dimensions and the specific placement of trees in fields. Equally, inspections over lapses such as slurry management and welfare standards are often haphazard.

The review comes as the government is preparing to publish an agriculture Command Paper that consults on future policy in this country after we leave the European Union.

Speaking at the NFU Conference today, Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

> The rules associated with current subsidy payments are unwieldy and, very often, counter-productive. They require farmers to spend

> long days ensuring conformity with bureaucratic processes which secure scarcely any environmental benefits and which, in turn, require a vast and inflexible bureaucracy to police.
>
> As does the current farming inspection regime, which, despite several recent attempts at simplification, remains as unwieldy as ever. Every year, farmers are confronted by a barrage of inspections from different agencies, often duplicating costs in both time and money.
>
> I am delighted to announce that Dame Glenys Stacey will be conducting a thorough and comprehensive review of this regime, seeing how these inspections can be removed, reduced or improved to reduce the burden on farmers, while maintaining and enhancing our animal and plant health standards.
>
> This review is not only long-required but also very timely as we guide our future approach and maximise the opportunities of leaving the EU. It will provide answers to some key general questions to guide our future approach, subject to the outcome of our negotiations with the EU.

Dame Glenys Stacey said:

> I am delighted to be asked to lead the much needed review of the farm inspection regime. With farming at the heart of the quality and safety of the food on our plate as well, and central to the stewardship of our wildlife, land and rivers, this is an excellent time to be working with farmers and their representatives, and all those who inspect farms, so as to get to a sensible inspection regime, post Brexit.

Dame Glenys has over twenty years' experience in driving reform within public sector organisations. As a former Chief Executive of Animal health, a precursor to the current Animal and Plant Health Agency, she is well versed in the inspection challenge facing our farmers.

The Command Paper will provide further detail on government proposals to design agricultural support fit for the future after we leave the EU.

1. Dame Glenys is an experienced regulator, chief inspector and chief executive. A solicitor by profession, she has over twenty years' CEO experience, having led the start up or turnaround of a number of public sector organisations responsible for legal and/or regulatory services. As the former CEO of Defra's Animal Health Agency she has valuable experience of farm inspection regimes, and the nature and value of farming in the UK.

2. Dame Glenys brings regulation and inspection experience from other public services. She joined Ofqual, the exams regulator in 2011 as its CEO and Chief Regulator, leading the implementation of the government’s planned reforms to qualifications in England and providing advice to government on how best to deliver government’s policy aims for qualifications. In March 2016 Dame Glenys took up the post of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Probation. The inspectorate sets standards and drives improvement in probation services, with the joint aims of reducing reoffending and protecting the public.

News story: Attorney General attends Overseas Territories Attorneys General Conference

The Attorney General for England and Wales, Jeremy Wright QC MP, representing the UK Government, and the Attorneys General of eight of the UK’s Overseas Territories (Anguilla; Bermuda; the British Virgin Islands; Cayman Islands; Montserrat; Pitcairn; the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia; and the Turks and Caicos Islands), the Senior Advisory Counsel of Gibraltar, Solicitors General of the Crown Dependencies of Guernsey and Jersey, and a representative from the US Department of Justice met in Bermuda from 13-15 February 2018 to discuss a range of topics relating to the rule of law and administration of justice in the Territories and to enhance our mutual cooperation.

The Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP said:

> During the conference we discussed cooperation on a number of important topics, including anti-corruption, transparency in the financial services industries in the Territories, child safeguarding, human rights, hurricane recovery efforts, criminal justice issues and support for the Territories’ good governance. We also had the opportunity to discuss the Territories’ interests in our Exit from the EU.
>
> We celebrated the extension to Bermuda and St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha of the UN Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women demonstrating our shared commitment to raising human rights standards across the Territories.
>
> We also welcomed continued work by the Territories with financial centres to support international efforts to tackle criminal financing and to promote tax transparency, in particular the

implementation of bilateral arrangements on beneficial ownership, and the example set by the Territories as early adopters of the OECD Common Reporting Standard.

We also highlighted important developments in anti-corruption, including ongoing work in Bermuda and the Turks and Caicos Islands towards extension of key conventions to their jurisdictions.

Those in attendance committed to:

1. Continue involving the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies in negotiations for leaving the EU, ensuring their interests are taken into account as we move to Phase 2. The UK Government has also committed to supporting the Overseas Territories Governments and the Crown Dependencies in their preparedness planning for EU Exit.

2. Continue to work in partnership with Territory governments to ensure that our financial sectors are hostile to illicit finances, to implement the bilateral arrangements on beneficial ownership, and to support each jurisdiction to adopt and implement international standards, including compliance with Financial Action Task Force standards, where they have not done so.

3. Work with the Overseas Territories Criminal Justice Adviser and Law Enforcement Adviser and with in-Territory stakeholders to build the legislative framework necessary to support reform of the criminal justice system, improve efficiency in the investigation and prosecution of crime, as well as efforts to prevent crime, supported by UK programme funds where necessary.

4. Continue to support efforts by relevant Territory governments on hurricane preparedness and recovery, including continued coordination and support between Territories.

5. Support the Territories to achieve extension of core Human Rights conventions where these have not been extended, and to complete a review of outstanding reservations against core UN human rights treaties.

6. Further enhance cooperation on child safeguarding through progress under the Overseas Territories Memorandum of Understanding and finalisation of National Response Plans and work towards extension of the Lanzarote Convention.

7. Work in partnership with Territories to address gaps in legislation pertaining to maritime obligations.

Press release: £1 million of charity funds returned after Commission inquiry

Around £1 million of funds have been made available for charity as a result of the Charity Commission's engagement with a grant-making charity.

In an inquiry report published today, the regulator outlines how governance failings resulted in unauthorised payments totalling approximately £650,000 to three trustees who were acting as consultants for the charity's wholly owned subsidiary limited company.

The Commission opened its inquiry in February 2017 after newly appointed solicitors sought the current and former trustees' relief from liability for the unauthorised payments, as well as permission to sell 99% of its shares in the subsidiary limited company.

The inquiry looked into the administration, governance and management of the charity, specifically regarding decision making and conflicts of interest; whether the proposed sale was in the best interests of the charity; whether there had been any private benefit to the current and former trustees; and whether restitution of funds was necessary.

The inquiry found that the consultants were conflicted as they had been trustees of the charity at the time of the payments, and had failed to identify or adequately manage this conflict of interest. The trustees were also unable to demonstrate that adequate records of their decisions had been maintained.

The inquiry considered the payments amounted to significant private advantage and financial benefit, as well as a direct breach of the charity's governing document and the trustees' legal duties. The trustees were also in violation of company law which requires them, as directors, to ensure records of their decisions are retained for at least 10years.

Although the inquiry recognised that the trustees had made "honest mistakes", there was a strict prohibition against private benefit in the governing document. The Commission therefore engaged further and the trustees agreed to seek recovery of the £650,000 and adopt a formal conflicts of interest policy.

After reviewing the charity's records the Commission was satisfied that the trustees had correctly managed conflicts of interest around the sale of the shares; the conflicted trustees had been removed from decision making and a new independent trustee appointed. The trustees had also sought independent professional advice and negotiated better terms to ensure that the sale was in the charity’s best interest.

The Commission therefore granted consent under s105 and s201 of the Charities Act to authorise the transaction, resulting in a further £350,000 going to the charity.

The inquiry remained open to ensure that the repayment took place, and was closed on 20 February with the publication of this report.

Harvey Grenville, Head of Investigations and Enforcement at the Charity Commission said:

> Actively managing conflicts of interest is a fundamental principle of trustee decision making. We recognise that trustees are human beings who may make honest mistakes, but the bottom line is that you must always act in the best interests of your charity.
>
> Our intervention has allowed this charity to claw back a significant amount of money that can now go to charitable causes. I hope this will encourage other charities to be mindful of their duties and consult our guidance when making important decisions.

The Commission’s full report of its inquiry is available on GOV.UK.

Notes to editors:

1. The Commission’s policy is to report on the outcome of statutory inquiries unless the public interest in not publishing would outweigh the public interest in publishing. The Commission carefully considered submissions from this charity which said that its identification in the inquiry report would be severely detrimental to the charity and its beneficiaries. However the Commission concluded that our findings should be published anonymously so that lessons could be learnt by other charities.
2. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see the about us page on GOV.UK.
3. Search for charities on our check charity tool.

Press release: Stanford-le-Hope man fined over £7,000 for fly-tipping

A man has been ordered to pay more than £7,000 in fines, compensation and costs after he admitted leaving mixed commercial waste on land owned by Thurrock Council.

Billy Prince illegally dumped the waste at a compound located on land at Stanford Road, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex in May 2015.

The compound is used to store street cleaning and highways team equipment and is not an authorised waste collection facility or site permitted for authorised waste disposal.

On 11 May 2015, Prince used a vehicle owned by his employer to unlawfully deposit a quantity of mixed commercial waste at the compound.

CCTV showed a vehicle which was later found to have been driven by Prince depositing waste at the site. There was a large yellow sign at the compound entrance that stated ‘No Tipping’.

The Environment Agency investigated the incident and determined that the offending was deliberate and undermined legitimate waste management activities. The offending caused inconvenience to the council and clean-up costs.

Prince was sentenced at Chelmsford Magistrates’ Court last week. The court heard Prince had pleaded guilty at the earliest opportunity and was ‘very remorseful’ of his actions, having lost his job as a result.

He was fined £2,000, ordered to pay compensation to Thurrock Council to the value of £3,970, costs of £1,105 and a victim surcharge of £120.

Environment Agency Enforcement Team Leader Lesley Robertson said she was pleased with the sentencing outcome, and it showed that the courts were taking such incidents seriously. She said:

> A community order or custody, as well as a financial penalty, could have been imposed. As this was a single offence the penalty was reduced and the magistrates felt a financial penalty, which totalled more than £7,000, was appropriate.
>
> This shows that even with a single fly tip the penalties are very high.