

News story: North Sea exploration funding announced

New exploration in the North Sea will be supported by a £5 million UK government fund for 2018/19, Philip Hammond announced today (25 September) during a visit to Aberdeen and Dundee. The funding will be used by the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) to survey under-explored areas of the UK Continental Shelf to find potential new deposits.

The announcement came on the same day that the Oil & Gas Technology Centre in Aberdeen, which the Chancellor visited and is part-funded by the UK government, said its work with industry on new subsea technologies could help unlock 400 million additional barrels of oil and gas from the North Sea and £3 billion of additional value to the industry.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, said:

The oil and gas industry remains vital for the Scottish economy and the UK as a whole. The £5 million funding I am announcing will help exploration to find potential new deposits, and boost prospects for jobs in Aberdeen and the surrounding area. This continues the UK government's extensive package of tax and funding support for the industry and the wider Scottish economy.

I've seen today how Dundee has benefitted from our life sciences and creative sector funding. I now look forward to progress being made on the Tay Cities Deal, which will follow the £1 billion already committed by the UK to Scotland's City Deals so far.

This government will continue using the UK's broad shoulders to provide Scotland with the skills and support it needs to thrive in the future.

UK Energy Minister, Richard Harrington, said:

North Sea oil will continue to fuel growth and jobs across Scotland and the rest of the UK, with an estimated 10-20 billion barrels still remaining.

I was in Aberdeen last month and saw first-hand the work of the Oil and Gas Authority which we established to be a strong, independent regulator focused on maximising economic recovery.

The sector continues to have the full support of the UK government, confidence is returning, and today's announcement recognises there are great opportunities for further exploration.

Earlier in the day, the Chancellor met local businesses in Dundee to discuss how UK government tax support has helped them grow, including reducing corporation tax and introducing creative sector tax relief. The waterfront regeneration underway in Dundee includes the stunning new V&A museum currently under construction, supported by £5 million UK government funding.

Philip Hammond also visited Dundee University life sciences complex, which is a world leader in areas including drug discovery. It has received more than £20 million in UK government funding in recent years and is now ranked highly on global ratings for its scientific excellence and impact of its research.

In Aberdeen, he met oil and gas industry representatives to discuss how the £5 million funding could help employment and the economy in the region. The UK government has given substantial support to the oil and gas sector, including a £1.3 billion package of tax cuts at Budget 2015 and a further £1 billion package at Budget 2016.

The UK internal market is the most important for Scotland's economy. Scotland sells four times as much to the rest of the UK as it does to the entire EU, for example, and the UK is currently working to protect the benefits of this market, and provide continuity and certainty as we prepare to leave the EU.

The UK government is also backing plans to establish Aberdeen as a global leader in decommissioning, creating skilled jobs and exporting this advanced knowledge to other countries. Tax relief for decommissioning is in place, covering around 40% of the total cost for UK companies and forecast to be worth around £24 billion between now and the 2050s. The OGA has also committed to reduce the overall costs for industry.

[News story: CEN updates affecting chemical measurements \(food\) September 2017](#)

The following lists of standards were published by the European standardisation organisation, CEN, during the period June to August 2017, some of which are relevant to chemical measurement in support of food regulation.

[EN 16995:2017](#) – Foodstuffs – Vegetable oils and foodstuff on basis of vegetable oils – Determination of mineral oil saturated hydrocarbons (MOSH) and mineral oil aromatic hydrocarbons (MOAH).

Mineral oil saturated hydrocarbons (MOSH) consist of linear and branched alkanes, and alkyl-substituted cycloalkanes, whilst mineral oil aromatic hydrocarbons (MOAH) include mainly alkyl-substituted polyaromatic

hydrocarbons.

Major sources of mineral oils in food may arise from food packaging and additives, processing aids, and lubricants used in food production and can have a potential adverse health effect.

This standard describes a method for the determination of saturated and aromatic hydrocarbons (from C10 to C50) in vegetable oils and food. The method uses on-line high performance liquid chromatography coupled to a gas chromatograph with a flame ionisation detector (HPLC-GC-FID). The method has been validated in an inter-laboratory trial using samples containing naturally contaminated and spiked MOSH and MOAH in vegetable oil samples, mayonnaise and margarine samples. The method has been proven suitable for determining MOSH and MOAH concentrations above 10 mg/kg in samples.

In case of suspected interferences from natural sources, the mineral origin of the MOSH and MOAH fraction can be verified by examining the fragmentation patterns using a gas chromatography coupled to a mass spectrometer detector (GC-MS).

[CEN/TS 17083:2017](#) – Foodstuffs – Determination of acrylamide in food and coffee by gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS)

Acrylamide is a substance that naturally forms in starchy food products during high-temperature cooking, including frying, baking, roasting and therefore can be found in wide range of foods including roasted potatoes and root vegetables, chips, crisps, toast, cakes, biscuits, cereals and coffee. Studies on laboratory animals have shown that exposure to acrylamide through the diet increases the likelihood of developing gene mutations and tumours in various organs.

This technical specification* provides a method for the determination of acrylamide in cereal-based products, potato-based products and coffee by gas-chromatography linked to a mass spectrometer detector (GC-MS). This was a single-laboratory validated method using acrylamide spiked samples in bread, water biscuit, infant cereal, biscuit, green coffee, roast coffee and instant coffee in the range 30 µg/kg to 1,500 µg/kg.

EN 16995 and TS 17083 have been developed in accordance with European Commission Mandate [M/463](#) to prepare standards for the determination of food contaminants implementing the framework of [Regulation \(EC\) No 882/2004](#) on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules.

Further information on food legislation can be found on the Government Chemist website:

[Food and feed law: Compendium of UK food and feed legislation with associated context and changes during April to June 2017 – Government Chemist Programme Report](#)

*A Technical Specification (TS) is an alternative normative document to a European Standard (EN) providing specifications for methodologies and/or evolving technologies.

Press release: UK AT HEART OF INTERNATIONAL MISSILE DEFENCE EXERCISE

US-led Exercise Formidable Shield has today begun in waters off the West Coast of Scotland.

A Royal Navy Type 45 Destroyer and two Type 23 Frigates will, alongside ships and crews from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and the United States, join one of the most sophisticated and complex air and missile exercises ever undertaken in the UK.

Lasting a month, allies will work together to detect, track and shoot down both anti-ship and ballistic missile targets. 13 ships will fire on 12 live missile targets over four days, improving how allies work together in an air and missile defence environment.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

North Korean tests have shown the danger of rogue states developing longer range missiles. By hosting this cutting-edge exercise in anti-missile defence with allied navies Britain is at the forefront of developing a more effective response to this growing threat.

Rear Admiral Paul Bennett, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Capability) said:

Formidable Shield is a terrific example of the leading role that the UK plays in development of maritime air and missile defence – protecting our people and working with our allies.

Ahead of the exercise, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and QinetiQ recently invested £60 million into the Hebrides Range to modernise the equipment and facilities. A further £16.8 million will be invested in two new BAE Systems tracking radars, to be installed on St Kilda, and upgrade two existing radars at MOD Hebrides.

The new radars are part of the £95m Air Range Modernisation programme agreed in December 2016 with the UK MOD.

[Press release: Priti Patel: Extra UK aid to Dominica following deadly Hurricane Maria](#)

VIDEO: [footage of International Development Secretary arriving on Tortola, British Virgin Islands](#)

VIDEOS AND PHOTOS: [latest photos and footage of the damage on the British Virgin Islands](#)

VIDEOS AND PHOTOS: [latest photos and footage of the devastation wrought in Dominica](#)

The UK is providing a further £5 million UK aid package for Dominica, the island worst hit by Hurricane Maria, the International Development Secretary announced during a visit to the region today (Sunday 24 September).

Hurricane Maria ripped through Dominica earlier this week, leaving 98% of buildings damaged and thousands without power. It was the first category five hurricane to hit the island in living memory, affecting almost the entire 70,000 population.

The UK aid will provide immediate relief, including shelter, hygiene kits and cooking equipment, to the areas left devastated by the tropical storm.

Ms Patel announced the fresh UK government support as she visited HMS Ocean, which on Friday delivered 60 tonnes of UK aid to the Caribbean, almost doubling the amount of aid in the region.

Later today, she will spend time on the British Virgin Islands where she will see UK aid in action, meeting families whose lives were torn apart by Hurricane Irma, which struck earlier this month. She will also visit Anguilla to see UK efforts to get schools and businesses up and running to speed up recovery.

The £5 million pledge brings the British Government's financial support for islands hit by Hurricane Maria and Hurricane Irma to £62 million. This has gone to islands including British Overseas Territories: British Virgin Islands, Anguilla and Turks and Caicos.

The British Government is also doubling UK public donations made to the British Red Cross' Irma and Maria appeals, a pledge which has so far raised over £2 million.

During the visit Ms Patel said:

The UK has pledged to give £5 million to the people of Dominica, the island worst hit by Hurricane Maria – on top of the £57 million

already promised to the region – to strengthen recovery following these relentless disasters.

I have come to the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla to see first-hand UK aid in action, helping families whose lives have been ripped apart first by Hurricane Irma and then Maria.

The UK is leading the way in the relief effort, delivering emergency food, water and shelter to those who need it most.

We will continue to clear up after this devastation in the weeks, months and years to come.

The UK was one of the first to arrive in Dominica following the storm, with DFID field teams immediately bringing urgent medical supplies such as insulin and water purifiers. Much needed shelter has also arrived.

The UK is working with the UN, Red Cross and other partners on the ground to distribute aid, including food, across Dominica. Alongside this, we are supporting the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) to provide emergency healthcare, safe water and sanitation, and manage disease outbreaks. UK aid will go directly on restoring health services and increasing access to healthcare in the most affected areas.

This UK aid comes after the Prime Minister of Dominica formally requested international support to address the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria.

40 DFID aid experts are on the ground alongside over 2,000 military and 50 police officers and DFID has chartered a number of flights and vessels which will transport additional relief items when and where they are most needed.

The DFID field team are also looking at long-term recovery on the islands, and rebuilding houses, hospitals and schools. During her visit, Ms Patel will meet Government representatives from the overseas territories to discuss how to build back better to make sure these islands have greater resilience to future storms.

40 tonnes of humanitarian aid has already been distributed across the Caribbean, including over four tonnes of food and water on the British Virgin Islands; 720 litres of water to the Turks and Caicos Islands; and over two tonnes of building materials to Anguilla.

Work to prepare Anguilla for the impact of Hurricane Maria proved hugely successful in preventing further damage to infrastructure. Two tonnes of corrugated iron was provided to bolster hospital and police stations roofs. Food, tarpaulins, hygiene and shelter kits provided by DFID are also being distributed on the island by the Red Cross.

Vital supplies, including food, bottled water and shelters, were also distributed to the Turks and Caicos Islands earlier this week via three RAF flights and DFID field teams are urgently assessing the damage on the island. A DFID barge will soon arrive with supplies to restore power, including

building materials, generators and equipment.

A Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Rapid Deployment Team (RDT) has arrived in St Lucia to provide consular assistance to affected British nationals who have left Dominica by ferry. The FCO is also finalising plans for an RDT to travel to Dominica to provide consular assistance to affected British Nationals.

1. The £5 million is UK Overseas Development Assistance funding for immediate humanitarian needs and early recovery in Dominica.
 2. This additional £5 million brings the total UK response to £62 million. On top of this, the British Government is matching public donations of up to £3 million to the British Red Cross' appeals for Hurricane Irma and Maria.
 3. Five DFID experts are currently on Dominica and are undertaking a rapid needs assessment to identify where aid will be delivered.
 4. DFID's initial assessment team has already moved essential supplies to the region ready to provide immediate assistance once we establish what is most needed. This is helping to restore vital communications and running water, and clearing roads.
 5. Response efforts are being led by DFID experts on the ground, working with national authorities and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).
 6. On Friday, HMS Ocean arrived with over 60 tonnes of UK aid on the British Virgin Islands to provide relief to the victims of both Hurricane Irma and Maria across the region.
 7. The ship arrived with 5,000 hygiene kits, 10,000 water buckets and over 500,000 water purification tablets to provide more than 10 million litres of water, along with more troops to support our aid experts on the ground who are helping restore the lives of those who have lost everything.
 8. This is on top of the 75 tonnes of DFID relief items that have arrived or been bought in the region, including food, water, nearly 3,000 shelter kits, 5,000 solar lanterns and 10,000 buckets.
 9. An additional \$19 million is being provided to Dominica by the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility – which UK aid, along with others, helped to establish – and CCRIF has paid out \$50.7 million in total in light of both Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria.
 10. VIDEO: [footage of International Development Secretary arriving on Tortola, British Virgin Islands](#)
 11. VIDEOS AND PHOTOS: [latest photos and footage of the damage on the British Virgin Islands](#)
 12. VIDEOS AND PHOTOS: [latest photos and footage of the devastation wrought in Dominica](#)
 13. More footage of the International Development Secretary's visit will be available later today. Please contact the press office on 0207 023 0600
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Speech: North East Economic Forum: Exchequer Secretary speech

Introduction

Good morning everyone. It's great to be here in Gateshead today.

This was an area I used to come to regularly when I was growing up.

I'm not actually from the North East – I'm a Yorkshireman born and bred – to the point where I even spent part of my career working for Yorkshire Tea!

But we used to head up the A1 to play the local rugby teams here.

And what's been fascinating to see is just how much this whole region has changed over the decades.

Now when you head up the A1, you're welcomed by that great show of Northern pride – the magnificent Angel of the North.

You see the world's first ever tilting bridge crossing the Tyne to join two vibrant, modern cities.

You see the curved glass of the fantastic Sage Gateshead drawing visitors from across the world.

And you come to the Baltic centre as we have today – and you don't find an old flour mill, you find a contemporary arts value of international renown.

It's certainly changed a fair bit over the years.

Former glories

These are all visible signs of what's been happening in this area – and I think in cities across the North the confidence and self-belief has returned, and is growing.

I don't want to focus too much on the glories of the past.

But the fact is that there was a time when our Northern cities didn't just lead the UK forward – they led the world. When George Stephenson built the first ever public steam railway to take coal between Stockton and Darlington.

When Charles Parsons was developing the steam turbine in Newcastle which revolutionised transport and energy.

When Harry Brearley found a way to make stainless steel – or rustless steel as it was called initially – down in Sheffield.

Restoration

I'm admittedly biased as a Northerner myself.

But the way I see it, our Northern cities used to be the drivers of this country's economic, scientific, and social progress in the 19th century.

That's something that fell away badly in the 20th century as these once powerful cities were allowed to fall into decline.

And now what we want for the 21st century is to recover that ground and see their resurgence.

That's what we're talking about in government, when we talk about our Northern Powerhouse.

It's not a short term project with budgets attached on skills or transport.

It's an idea, an ambition and a promise.

It is a long term government commitment that we will restore our Northern cities to their former place at the vanguard of the UK's economy.

Recommitment

Earlier this month, my colleague at the Treasury, Philip Hammond spoke for the whole of government when he made it clear that the Northern Powerhouse isn't some flash in the pan government project.

It's an economic imperative that is, will remain, and must be at the very top of our agenda.

And it's not just about cities like Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds.

It's the North as a whole – it's Newcastle, it's Sunderland, it's Gateshead, it's Hull.

It's every Northern town and city that has unlocked, untapped potential.

Both to offer a better life for the people who live there – with great jobs, great transport, great attractions adding to all the natural appeal these areas already have in spades.

But as well as improving the quality of lives here, it's also about fulfilling the potential of the North East – and North West and Yorkshire and the Humber too – to really power our national economy forwards as was once the case.

To drive our scientific advances.

To make our cultural mark on the world stage.

Lots to offer

Now in many ways, we can see these things happening already.

The Great Exhibition of the North that will be held here next year is all about showcasing our world-class art, culture and innovation – both past and present. I understand Stephenson's Rocket built in Newcastle is going to be on display.

There also remains a powerful tradition of manufacturing here in the North East – particularly in terms of chemicals, metals and transport equipment.

Particularly of course in cars. The automotive industry is very important in the UK and is a real speciality of this region.

Sunderland's Nissan plant alone produced almost 30% of all UK-built cars last year, and builds more cars than Italy.

And this is a region with a global reputation for life sciences too. Newcastle's Centre for Life is at the helm of that – not only bringing talented researchers together, but also inspiring our next generation of young scientists with their exhibitions and events.

So I was pleased to see it get a funding boost just this month of £2.6 million from the Business Department and Wellcome.

Beyond its manufacturing and scientific prowess, this a great place to invest. Last year, foreign investment in the North East created more jobs relative to the working age population than any other region outside London.

And we saw a faster increase in the number of businesses operating in the North East than anywhere else in the country.

Since 2010, nowhere in the country has seen bigger productivity gains than we've seen here in the North East. Unemployment has fallen most here.

And pay has risen most – an average of 11.5% higher than 2010.

The issues

But in celebrating what this region has to offer, and has achieved, I won't gloss over the issues.

It's the problems that this government is working on.

For example, I just mentioned pay rising here – but we also have to remember that earnings here are still a fair way under the UK average.

That's to be expected when hand-in-hand with that, we have 27% per cent of the population aged 16 and over with no formal qualifications, the second highest rate for any English region.

And despite having some of the best universities in the country, the North

East itself has far fewer graduates than the UK average – with just over 31% compared to 38%.

Productivity is another case in point.

Good gains have been made here, but there remains a prominent productivity gap – 12% compared to the UK average and 33% behind London.

Some good things, but some real challenges.

So what can be done to start to turn these things around?

In short, we need two things.

A North that's ambitious and empowered to lead the way.

And a government that's prepared to back it all the way.

Devolution

Now on the former, we've been undertaking the biggest transfer of power away from Westminster to English regions in living memory.

Only a few months ago, six mayors were elected in England – three of which were in the North – Ben in Tees Valley, Andy in Manchester and Steve in Liverpool.

I was saddened to learn last year that the North East would not be electing a mayor, but I understand and respect local leaders' decisions in this area.

However, government was clear at the time that we would continue to work with those authorities committed to devolution and we're having constructive discussions with the North of Tyne authorities on a potential deal and conversations all over the country on what can be done.

Each of the new Mayors has unprecedented powers and funding for local priorities such as transport, planning and skills.

These will make a real difference tackling issues locally and for helping to address the productivity challenge our economy faces.

I'm looking forward to working with these great regional ambassadors and seeing what we can achieve together.

Government backing

1. Connectivity

But it's not just about what local leaders and businesses can do.

Because as I said, the second thing that's needed is a government that is active in backing you.

A clear example of that is when it comes to improving connectivity.

I could be biased. I spent several years as a transport minister. But connectivity matters.

That's both about ease of movement between places – which doesn't just make people's lives easier, it helps businesses win investment and save money too.

But it's also about digital connectivity too – and it's really important that in this new era of information, the North East, and North more generally, is well connected.

I know from first-hand how much that matters for businesses and families – there are still villages and homes in my own constituency in Yorkshire that can't get mobile reception let alone high-speed broadband.

So that requires serious investment from the government and that's what we've been focused on.

This year, for example, I launched a Digital Infrastructure Investment Fund to improve the UK's internet connections.

And we've already started to deliver full fibre in the North East through the Superfast Programme – with potential for much more through our £200 million Local Full Fibre Networks programme.

And on transport links, there's a huge amount going on. Over 20 schemes in the North East will receive investment from the £380m allocated to the region from the Local Growth Fund.

Just today, the first phase of upgrading the A1 between Leeming and Barton is opening – with the full road due for completion this winter. When fully complete this will create a motorway standard route between London and Newcastle for the first time.

But effective transport means a lot more than just creating motorways. We are investing in our major 'A' roads too, such as the improvements to the A19 at Testos and Downhill Lane in South Tyneside, and between Norton and Wynyard in Stockton-on-Tees. We are also making further improvements to the A1 at Newcastle and south of Gateshead – all of these will help to speed up so many daily journeys.

And we are investing in local roads too. We've provided £21 million towards the Morpeth Northern Bypass, the last section of the A1 to South East Northumberland link road. This will relieve congestion to Morpeth, and improve links to development sites in the area. We are not buying tarmac and bridges just because we like them. We are buying opportunity and access across these areas.

There's also the Great North Rail project – in the next five years, well over £1 billion will be spent operating, renewing, enhancing and maintaining the rail infrastructure across the North of England.

This will dramatically improve journeys for passengers across the North. There will be more and faster services across the region, including between

Newcastle, Manchester and Liverpool.

By 2020 all the trains will be brand new or completely refurbished, and all the Pacer trains will be gone.

And train manufacturing has also returned to the North East. There are now over 1,000 staff and apprentices at the Hitachi site in Newton Aycliffe, producing state-of-the-art modern intercity trains. The first of these trains will be in use on the Great Western line from this Autumn.

I first came to visit this site when it was a green field.

2. Industry support

Beyond connectivity, it's about supporting our industries as the future marches on.

We're working on a modern industrial strategy to do just that.

But meanwhile, we're making good progress in key areas for the region.

As I've already said, life sciences is real strength in the North East.

And we're working with the leading immunologist and geneticist, Sir John Bell on how we support the life sciences sector. The industry-led Life Sciences Industrial Strategy was published at the end of August. We are now working with Sir John and others in the sector to agree an ambitious Sector Deal – with offers and asks on each side of the table.

We've also made a substantial real terms increase in government investment in Research and Development – an extra £2 billion a year by the end of this Parliament. This will include funds targeted at cutting edge healthcare and medicines.

And here in the North East, we've allocated £8.6 million from the Local Growth Fund to the Life Sciences Incubation hub. This hub, the product of a collaboration between Newcastle University and Newcastle City Council, will take forward the LEP's ambition to develop a life sciences super cluster for the North East – with significant new facilities for research, and space for science-based businesses.

And we are investing now in our manufacturing capacity. Nearby, Redcar is home to the headquarters of the £100 million Centre for Process Innovation, part of our High Value Manufacturing Catapult network.

We're investing half a billion in advanced propulsion technology.

And just nearby – in fact, I'm going to go and take a look this afternoon – there's the International Advanced Manufacturing Park – where £75m of publicly funded infrastructure will support a predicted £400 million of private sector investment, and the creation of over 5,000 jobs across the advanced manufacturing and automotive sectors.

The point that I'm trying to make is that government is serious about investment in our scientific and industrial development, which is so central to this region's economy.

3. Skills

And the third and final factor I'll mention today, is what we're doing on skills.

Because let me take you back to that stat I gave you earlier.

27% per cent of over-16s in the North East having no formal qualifications.

Which means lower wages, and less opportunity and freedom to live the lives people want.

So it really matters that we make a big difference here – not only for people on an individual level, but for our businesses which rely on their talents to succeed.

I think this is an issue for the UK as a whole but particularly where we are.

So we've got a lot of work going on here.

We're completely reforming technical education for a start – we need to see bright people coming through who can work in the advanced industrial roles the 21st century needs.

We're really pushing apprenticeships – again to give people the skills businesses need, and we've done a lot of work with employers to make them really useful, stretching training opportunities.

I hope that the many fantastic businesses in the North East that already take on apprentices – from Hodgson Sayers in the construction and manufacturing sector to Sage Gateshead in the creative – will lead really lead the way as business and Government works together to deliver 3 million apprenticeship starts in England by 2020.

Conclusion

So there is a lot of action happening to lay the foundations for that Northern resurgence.

The Northern Powerhouse is about cultural aspiration but the policies around devolution and transport and skills will help.

And the thing to stress is that this isn't a one-sided venture.

This isn't a bunch of politicians in Westminster laying down the law.

And I don't think it would be.

This is a team effort.

This is about government, business, and local authorities across the North all working together.

And the message I want to end with here in Gateshead is this:

It will take hard work.

It will take investment.

It will take ambition.

It will take partnership and collaboration.

But the North East can once again be the engine of the UK's economic, scientific and cultural progress.

Let's not lose any opportunity to see that happen.