

[News story: New round of multi-million tech competition launches to improve rail journeys](#)

Lightweight energy-saving carriages, software telling passengers how busy arriving trains are, and personalised ticket machines that help customers with their ongoing journeys are just some of the projects that have won funding in the government's railways innovation scheme.

Now another £7.9 million is on offer to develop cutting-edge ways to improve the network for passengers in the next round of the [Accelerating Innovation in Rail \(AIR\) scheme](#), run by the Department for Transport (DfT) in partnership with Innovate UK.

The competition is open to companies of all sizes across the UK, but all entries must be collaborative, involving at least two different organisations and at least one SME. Entries will be accepted from 18 September to 15 November 2017.

Rail Minister Paul Maynard said:

We want to see ideas that improve reliability on the network for passengers. We have a wealth of pioneering, innovative companies out there ready to put their ideas into practice.

This is about nurturing innovation on the railways and about developing trains that are less reliant on complex and expensive infrastructure.

We want to tap into these inventive and ground-breaking ideas for the benefit of rail passengers across the country, and to support the biggest modernisation programme in rail since the Victorian era.

The [last funding round in March this year](#) attracted a diverse range of entries, including designing automated vehicles to carry out track inspections, improving trackside drainage to cut delays and line closures, and software to predict when potential train breakdowns might occur

The funding has been allocated through a rigorous assessment process involving experts from the industry, and has attracted up to £4 million in private sector finance as well. Following successful testing and demonstration, successful projects will have the potential to be rolled out across the network.

Speech: Sir Alan Duncan speaks at the First President Library in Astana

[in English]

Good morning, and thank you Timur for that warm welcome. It is a privilege for me to have arrived in Astana yesterday in time to mark the 22nd anniversary of adoption of Kazakhstan's constitution. So I wish you all, one day late, a very happy Constitution Day.

I am particularly delighted to be speaking to you in this impressive library dedicated to President Nazarbayev, who has done so much to shape Kazakhstan since its independence. Indeed, I think I am the first Foreign Minister to speak in this library, so I am honoured.

As I look around, I am stunned by the sight of a gleaming new capital city arising from the eternal steppes. Astana is a truly magnificent achievement, which the nation should be rightly proud of. Everything I have seen so far – from the Baiterek, through to EXPO, through to this magnificent library, shows me a country which has made massive strides since your independence just over a quarter of a century ago.

This year we are also celebrating 25 years of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom. I am pleased to say that today, that relationship has never been stronger. It is a relationship that our leaders have recognised as an important one and so they have strengthened our ties through engagement between our peoples. Indeed David Cameron visited in 2013, the first visit to Kazakhstan by a serving British Prime Minister, and President Nazarbayev, visited the UK just eighteen months ago. I look forward to our two countries continuing to build on that relationship over the next 25 years and beyond that. Indeed, our bilateral relationship stretches from cooperation on the international stage, through to helping Kazakhstan realise its own ambitious programme of reform.

Now, I myself had a fascinating meeting with your Foreign Minister yesterday and I look forward to meeting Prime Minister Sagintayev after this speech. During my meeting with Foreign Minister Abdrakhmanov, we discussed the cooperation between our two countries and I conveyed a clear message and that message was that the UK remains committed to developing this dynamic bilateral relationship, which has already achieved a great deal in the last five years but still has scope for further development.

Now, there is no doubt that the biggest policy issuing focusing minds in the UK is our departure from the European Union. But let me be clear, the UK will continue to engage with the world. As we leave the European Union, we are not leaving Europe. We also want to strengthen our relationships and build stronger partnerships with countries such as Kazakhstan as we look to the

future.

So as Kazakhstan and the UK look to the future together, and as the UK looks to develop a new role outside of the EU, both continuity and the future are the themes for my comments. Both Britain's continuing place in the global community, and looking forward with optimism to a future outside of the EU.

Some of you may be familiar with the name Alexander Graham Bell, he was the Scottish inventor who invented the telephone. He once said that when one door closes another one opens. We have a word for that in English – opportunity.

And I think that he was right, not only in saying that when one door closes another opens, but also in his assertion that sometimes we spend so long looking at the door that is closing, we see too late to notice the one that is open.

And so, as the UK prepares to leave the European Union, we may be closing the door on our EU membership, but there will be many, many more doors across the world opening up.

Over the next 18 months, we will negotiate the manner, the nature of our departure from the EU, and we will construct a new relationship with our European neighbours.

Now this will represent a fundamental change in our legal relationship with the European Union, but not to our outward looking view of the world. What you will not see is the UK closing all our doors. We are not leaving Europe and we are not pulling back from the world.

Instead, we will embrace the opportunities that lie before us and build a truly global Britain. One which strengthens our relationships and reaches out to build new partnerships across the world.

International stage

When the British people voted last year to leave the EU, they did not choose to withdraw the UK from the UN Security Council or from NATO. They did not pull the plug on our membership of the G7, the G20 or the Commonwealth. They did not sign away Britain's long-standing and hard-won commitment to the values of freedom, of democracy, and of the rule of law.

So we will continue to work tirelessly with our partners, including Kazakhstan, in international organisations to promote and defend global peace and security, and to protect the rules based international system.

The UK has always been, and will remain, an outward-facing sovereign nation, and, I hope, a force for good, with a diplomatic network that is respected across the world. Looking forward, we will continue to put that network to good use, reaching out to new trading partners and working with our international partners to find solutions to some of the world's most complex challenges. Our commitment to our extensive security cooperation with our allies remains solid.

In this, Kazakhstan is an important partner.

And until the end of next year, Kazakhstan will sit on the United Nations Security Council, as a non-permanent member. I echo the words of your own Foreign Minister, that it was high time that a Central Asian country joined the Council. These two years present Kazakhstan with a unique opportunity to play a major role in tackling the most serious security issues facing the world. It will allow you to bring your unique geographical, historical and cultural perspective to the work of the Council.

Global challenges

Now security is just one of the challenges we face together. There are aspects of this we must consider and we can address these challenges as international partners on the UN Security Council.

Now, consider Syria for instance. The UK condemns the use of chemical weapons, by anyone, anywhere. It is vital that the international community does all it can to rid the world of chemical weapons attacks once and for all.

Also, the UK is the second largest donor country of bilateral humanitarian aid in response to the crisis in Syria, having committed over £2.46 billion to vulnerable and displaced people inside Syria and to refugees in neighbouring countries. We are also leading international support for the Syrian White Helmets, whose volunteers have saved over 95,000 lives.

And then there's Afghanistan – where the UK is committed to creating security and prosperity. In June, the UK announced an increase in its commitment to Afghanistan, with additional troops to support NATO's Train, Advise and Assist Mission in the country. And that uplift will add to the significant contribution of 500 troops the UK already makes to NATO efforts in Afghanistan. We are proud to work in close partnership with the Afghan Government to help it deliver the economic opportunities and security that the Afghan people are looking for and to create an Afghanistan that is less dependent on external support. I know that Kazakhstan is also committed to finding a solution to the ongoing conflict there. I hope that we can work together to help Afghanistan create and shape its own political settlement.

And there's North Korea. It is important to maintain strong international pressure on North Korea, both diplomatically and through sanctions. Their latest missile launch over Japan is a reckless provocation. So I am pleased that both the UK and Kazakhstan supported Security Council Resolution 2371 earlier this month, which imposed the toughest measures ever adopted by the Security Council on North Korea. The focus of both our countries has to be on ensuring that sanctions are rigorously implemented and enforced by all UN Member States so that they are effective at limiting the regime's ability to pursue its illegal nuclear weapons programme.

The UK will continue to play its part on the world stage to tackle all of these challenges head on.

And it is in that same spirit that we welcome Kazakhstan's vital contribution in developing the Low Enriched Uranium Bank, which was opened this week. It will play an important role in ensuring that there is a safe, secure and assured source of Low Enriched Uranium to generate nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The Kazakh Government has shown great leadership in taking this important issue forward, and I am pleased that the UK was able to make a financial contribution through the European Union to this project.

Defence / International aid

So, as we look forward towards our future as a force for good outside the EU, we also have the means and the ambition to play a broader positive role in the world.

That is demonstrated in our commitments on defence spending and on international aid. The UK is the only country in the world that meets both its NATO pledge to spend 2% of its GDP on defence, and we also meet the UN target of spending 0.7% of our Gross National Income on development. And these together ensure that we defend our values, work to tackle poverty and conflict, and help to protect the most vulnerable people in our world.

We also remain a passionate advocate for supporting the right and power of women to play a vital role in building a fairer and more just society for future generations. We know that building prosperity for all is vital for long-term stability, and that is why we are working hard to increase women's participation in all areas of life.

Peace is vital to that agenda. That is why I am pleased to say that the UK is sixth largest financial contributor to UN Peacekeeping – some 700 British peacekeepers are deployed in six missions around the world. We support Kazakhstan's commitment to develop its peacekeeping capacity in support of UN operations. We have worked together to sharpen that capacity, through the Steppe Eagle peacekeeping training programme, which is the UK's largest bilateral defence exercise. I eagerly await Kazakhstan's first deployment on UN Peacekeeping Operations.

Values

So, the UK is, and will remain, a committed and engaged player on the global stage, championing the values we have always held dear, which are the values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

But, the real test of any partnership of equals is a willingness to be honest with each other. I recognise that Kazakhstan has made real progress on implementing human rights protections, in accordance with internationally recognised standards. As you make ever greater strides to secure an even more prosperous, ever more developed future for your nation, it is important to remember that the foundations for this future rest on a society where human rights and the equality of all citizens under the law is guaranteed and enshrined. So we will continue to take forward our dialogue on reform, including freedom of expression and religious choice.

Together we have worked closely on the President's reform programme. One important area of collaboration is judicial reform. In June, the UK Law Society, in partnership with Astana International Financial Centre and the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan, ran a training project to provide Kazakh judges with an understanding of the English common law system and the rule of law.

I was also delighted that we welcomed a high-level delegation from the criminal justice system to the UK, to learn about how our system works. And I am pleased to announce today, UK investment of about US \$100,000 for a new project. The NGO, Penal Reform International will work in partnership with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Kazakhstan Government's Anti-Corruption Agency to train prison officers to attain international standards in your prisons, thus contributing to President Nazarbayev's ambitious programme of reforms in the judicial and rule of law sectors.

Trade

The UK has a proud history as a trading nation, and we have long been one of the strongest advocates of free trade. Kazakhstan will continue to remain a key partner for the UK. We are currently the sixth largest investor here. Since Kazakhstan's independence in 1991, we have invested more than £20bn. Once we leave the EU we will look to remove barriers to trade, and so ensure continuity in our trade and investment relationships.

Kazakhstan remains an attractive market for UK companies. There are now over 500 British companies registered here. Many are active in the oil and gas and mining sectors. But there is also increasing collaboration between the new Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) and the City of London. The Lord Mayor of London's visit in July highlighted our close cooperation in developing the Centre and I welcome Kazakhstan's decision to use English Common Law as the basis for the Financial Centre including its Court of Arbitration.

I am also delighted that we are taking part in EXPO 2017. It is an excellent opportunity for the UK to show that it is open for business. I had a fantastic time when I visited yesterday. And whilst, as a British Minister, I am obliged to say that the UK pavilion was of course the best at EXPO, I was amazed and impressed by the scale and imagination of the Kazakh pavilion – which truly captured both the history and culture of Kazakhstan and at the same time, your collective vision for the future.

EXPO shows too that Kazakhstan is taking its place in the world, with 115 countries and 22 international organisations taking part. I hope that EXPO will open new doors and new opportunities for Kazakhstan – such as modern trading routes along the old Silk Road.

As this takes shape there will be considerable opportunity for cooperation between the UK, China and Kazakhstan. Our Embassy here in Astana is working closely with the Kazakhstan Ministry of Investment and Development to identify potential joint projects that would be delivered here. We hope to hold an event soon with participants from all three countries, aimed at identifying a new consortium to deliver the first belt and road project in

Kazakhstan

So to end where I started: the UK is not looking, in mood of regret, on closed doors. To quote the famous US astronaut, Buzz Aldrin, a man who inspired generations, including possibly our own British astronaut, Tim Peake, "There are always door openings. And gradually, the opportunities open up in front of you."

We will always be a committed and engaged player in the global community, and we look forward, optimistically, to the opportunities brought by our exit from the EU. I personally look forward to building further on the UK's relationship with Kazakhstan as we open new doors and build a prosperous future together.

[News story: Scotland to pioneer future of global oil and gas industry](#)

Andrew Jones, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, will speak at the oil and gas industry's largest conference – Offshore Europe – which begins in Aberdeen today (5 September).

Cleaning up and dismantling old oil rigs and pipelines – known as 'decommissioning' – must be carried out by all operators once they have finished extracting oil and gas in the UK. The North Sea is one of the first regions in the world to start decommissioning on such a large scale.

As oil fields mature across the world, the minister has said there is opportunity for the UK to become pioneers in this area. He believes the sector should develop this expertise and sell it to the world.

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Andrew Jones MP, said:

The UK oil and gas industry supports 300,000 jobs, and with up to 20 billion barrels of oil yet to recover, has many productive years ahead. As the need for decommissioning grows, we must seize the opportunity to cement the UK as a world-leader in this field and export this knowledge globally.

Efficient decommissioning means big changes to the oil and gas industry – requiring new technology, skills and innovative approaches. This will ensure that decommissioning is safe and cost-effective while also protecting the environment.

Chief Executive of The Oil and Gas Authority, Andy Samuel, said:

Decommissioning presents great opportunities for innovation and the development of UK skills and capability. We are working closely with operators and service providers and are already seeing some great performance in cost efficient decommissioning, new collaborations and technology trials. This bodes well for the shared target of 35% cost reductions and the considerable domestic and export value that can be realised.

The UK's head start on cleaning up the North Sea means that 10% of old oil and gas facilities have already been removed – and in the next ten years alone, more than 100 platforms will need to be scrapped and over 1,800 oil wells plugged.

The Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) forecasts that UK oil and gas operators will spend almost £60 billion on decommissioning between now and the 2050s.

To ensure this industry thrives, conditions must be right. The government provides tax relief on decommissioning which covers around 40% of the total cost for UK companies – forecasted to be worth around £24 billion between now and the 2050s. The OGA have also pledged to reduce the overall cost by 35%. Taken together, these measures will help companies make the best of decommissioning, creating new opportunities, advancing technology and generating more jobs.

The UK has already started to see large decommissioning projects that demonstrate new ways of doing things and push technological boundaries, including Brent (Shell), Murchison (CNR) and the Southern North Sea (ConocoPhillips).

Press release: £40m cash injection to benefit lives of young people

Youth organisations will receive £40 million to boost the skills and life chances of young people living in disadvantaged areas, Minister for Sport and Civil Society Tracey Crouch announced today.

The money is set to benefit 300,000 young people, providing new opportunities for them to get involved in their communities, support their personal development and get the skills and confidence they need to enter the workplace.

It will be used to create new youth clubs in rural areas, expand sports projects to build the confidence of young people encouraging them to get active and increase services providing support and guidance to young people.

The Youth Investment Fund – made up of government and National Lottery players money from the from the [Big Lottery Fund](#) – will be shared by 86 youth organisations in East London, Liverpool City Region, West Midlands, Tees Valley and Sunderland, Bristol & Somerset and Eastern Counties over the next three years.

Minister for Civil Society Tracey Crouch, said:

This investment from the government and National Lottery players will have a transformational effect on the lives of some of our most disadvantaged young people. It will help thousands who might otherwise have gone under the radar flourish. Local voluntary and community youth organisations already do so much fantastic work and this £40 million will enrich the lives of many more young people throughout England.

Dawn Austwick, Chief Executive, Big Lottery Fund said:

The Youth Investment Fund is a welcome boost for the many great community organisations that work with young people locally. Money raised by National Lottery players creates opportunities for young people to build on their talents and strengths and the Youth Investment Fund is an important part of the jigsaw for the youth sector.

Examples of projects that will receive funding to better the lives of young people in their area are:

[Youth Federation](#): The Liverpool-based charity will receive £749,664 to improve youth provision across Wirral, Halton and St Helens. Youth Federation aims to reach out to nearly 5,000 local young people, providing coding and digital skills to increase their employability and improve mental health through sport.

[Kite Trust](#): Cambridgeshire LGBT charity will be awarded £193,554 to create four safe spaces for 600 young people to receive advice and support on issues such as isolation. The charity will also develop and implement an education and corporate training programme for schools and businesses in the region to promote equality and inclusion.

[SkyWay](#): Located in Hackney, the charity delivers a wide range of activities and programmes in youth clubs, sports centres, parks and house estates. It will use £407k in funding to improve its offer to young people by buying new equipment such as cooking utensils, arts and crafts kits and sports equipment, that will be used in support sessions. It will also increase the number of young people being trained as young leaders, a programme that is currently oversubscribed at Skyway.

The fund will allow the chosen organisations to expand the services they

provide to young people, and sustain them over the coming years.

The [New Philanthropy Capital](#) and the [Centre for Youth Impact](#) will work alongside each of the 86 organisations to evaluate the impact of their work with young people.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please call the DCMS press office on 020 7211 2210
- The Youth Investment Fund is equally funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Big Lottery Fund.
- The Big Lottery Fund is the largest funder of community activity in the UK. It puts people in the lead to improve their lives and communities, often through small, local projects. It is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised by National Lottery players for good causes. In 2016/17 it awarded £712.7 million and supported more than 13,814 projects across the UK for health, education, environment and charitable purposes. Since June 2004 it has awarded £8.5 billion to projects that change the lives of millions of people.
- Breakdown of the bidding [criteria](#) (PDF, 88.6KB, 4 pages) .
- The fund will be given to organisations in East London, Liverpool City Region, West Midlands, Tees Valley and Sunderland, Bristol & Somerset and Eastern Counties. These areas were chosen based on measures of deprivation, to make sure that the funding reaches areas of greatest need

[Press release: PM meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir: 4 September 2017](#)

The Prime Minister held a short meeting at Downing Street with the Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir earlier today.

They discussed a range of bilateral and regional issues, including the

ongoing isolation of Qatar in the Gulf region, with the Prime Minister reiterating her call for all sides to take steps to de-escalate the situation and restore Gulf Co-operation Council unity at the earliest opportunity.

They also discussed Saudi Arabia's "Vision 2030" programme for reform and modernisation. The Prime Minister noted its focus on transformation, innovation and empowerment and said that the UK looked forward to continuing to work closely with Saudi Arabia on this ambitious project. She hoped that Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman would be able to visit the UK in the near future to build on the historic partnership between the two countries.

Finally, they discussed Yemen, the need to bring the conflict to an end, and the continued importance of demonstrating compliance with international humanitarian law.