

[News story: Accelerator webinar: revolutionise the human information relationship for Defence](#)

The webinar provided information about the £6 million Innovation Fund competition, for those who couldn't make it to the [main networking event on 23 February 2017](#).

The [competition](#) is seeking new technologies, processes and ways of working to improve the way we analyse and exploit data. With the relationship between human and information at the centre of war-fighting we need Defence leaders to have access to the right information on critical issues to enable decision making that outpaces our adversaries.

Phase 1 proposals are now invited and must be received by no later than 12 noon on 21 March 2017.

[News story: First Innovation Fund challenge event – presentation slides](#)

At the event in London, a series of presentations provided details of three challenges that make up the Defence and Security Accelerator competition '[Revolutionise the human information relationship for Defence](#)'.

To [set the scene](#), Accelerator Acting Head Rob Solly and Innovation Partner Jim Pennycook opened the event, giving an overview of proof-of-concept research funding opportunities for innovative science and technology providers.

Rear Admiral Tim Fraser and military staff from Joint Force Command outlined the importance of this competition for defence.

Challenge 1

[Challenge 1](#): allowing rapid and automated integration of new sensors was introduced, with details provided from a military and technical perspective.

Challenge 2

[Challenge 2](#): free up personnel by the innovative use of machine learning algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI) for military advantage was

explained from a military and technical challenge perspective.

Challenge 3

[Challenge 3](#): make effective use of operator cognitive capacity, particularly by human-machine teaming was outlined, again with details from a technical and military view.

The competition was then summed up by Joint Force Command and the competition process was explained.

Other opportunities

UK Defence Solutions Centre then talked about export opportunities and Dual Use Technology Exploitation gave an overview of opportunities through non-defence markets.

How to work with the Accelerator

The Accelerator team then outlined how organisations can [access the Accelerator and gave advice on how to submit good proposals](#) for funding.

Unmanned Warrior

A briefing on the Unmanned Warrior was then given.

[News story: Invitation to tender for research from the Low Pay Commission 2017](#)

The Low Pay Commission is commissioning new research to understand the effects of the NLW. The closing date is 13 March 2017.

The introduction of the National Living Wage is a major change for the labour market – likely to represent a sharp increase in the nominal, real and relative value of the UK's pay floor. Coverage is set to triple by 2020.

In some sectors more than half of workers could be paid at the minimum – all at a time of major change in the economy, and the welfare system. It is, in effect, a natural experiment.

Such a significant change in the minimum wage is likely to have a wide set of effects and there are many approaches that could be used to analyse such

effects.

The Low Pay Commission has launched its latest invitation to tender for research. Please see the links below to the projects on the central procurement provider, UKSBS Contracts Finder. The deadline is 13 March 2017. These are open tender calls for research and cover 3 areas.

We are commissioning research:

- **on the impact of the National Minimum Wage and the new National Living Wage on employment and hours (UK SBS BLOJEU-CR17029LPC).**

One project will be commissioned with a total budget up to £60,000. [Link to Contracts Finder.](#)

- **into the impact of the minimum wage regime on the labour market outcomes of young workers (UK SBS BLOJEU-CR17030LPC).**

One project will be commissioned with a total budget up to £60,000. [Link to Contracts Finder.](#)

- **open call for Other Research on the Impact of the National Living Wage (UK SBS BLOJEU-CR17028LPC).**

Up to four projects will be commissioned, with a total budget of £100,000. [Link to Contracts Finder.](#)

Please circulate to colleagues who may be interested.

Please also note that the LPC will be holding a research workshop on the afternoon of Thursday 6 April. Details will follow shortly.

[News story: Low Pay Commission visits programme 2017](#)

The Low Pay Commission's purpose is to provide advice to the Government on the rates of the National Living Wage and the other National Minimum Wages, as well as other related issues.

We want to hear first hand evidence from employers, workers and anyone else with a view on the minimum wage and its effects.

We are visiting Leeds, Glasgow and East Renfrewshire, Belfast, Newport and

Gwent, and Melton and East Northamptonshire.

See the table below for dates, and click the link below to arrange a meeting with us. You can also give us a call on 020 7215 8772.

We are particularly interested in the effects of the National Living Wage, the minimum wage for workers aged 25 and over, which was introduced at £7.20 in April 2016 and will rise to £7.50 on 1 April 2017.

All the other minimum wage rates will increase on 1 April as well (see table below for rates) and we would like to hear views on these too.

The LPC organises an annual programme of visits to gather evidence in support of our recommendations to government. The visits are attended by members of our Commission and Secretariat.

We can host meetings in the locations we visit, but it is also extremely useful for us to visit businesses and workers at their place of work to see the effects of the minimum wage 'on the ground'. So, we would be delighted if you would like to host us and show us around your business.

Please note that the date of the visit to Belfast has been changed since the programme was originally sent to our stakeholders.

| Date | Location |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 26-27 April | Leeds |
| 31 May-1 June | Glasgow and East Renfrewshire |
| 7-8 June | Belfast |
| 5-6 July | Newport and Gwent |
| 9-10 August | Melton and East Northamptonshire |

National Minimum Wage rates

| Minimum Wage rate | Current rate (hourly) | Rate from 1 April 2017 |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| National Living Wage | £7.20 | £7.50 |
| 21-24 Year Old Rate | £6.95 | £7.05 |
| 18-20 Year Old Rate | £5.55 | £5.60 |
| 16-17 Year Old Rate | £4.00 | £4.05 |
| Apprentice Rate | £3.40 | £3.50 |
| Accommodation offset | £6.00 | £6.40 |

[Press release: UK food takes centre stage at world's largest annual trade](#)

[show](#)

Award-winning Welsh marmalade, mozzarella from Durham, and shortbread from Glasgow are among nearly 100 UK food and drink specialities showcasing the best of British today at the world's largest annual food trade show in Dubai.

Gulfood brings together more than 100,000 buyers, investors and producers from around the world – and thanks to ongoing government investment and support it will give budding exporters and established global-hitters across the country the chance to promote their produce and boost exports to the region.

The Gulf is the UK's third largest export market – worth more than £1.5 billion – and is already home to more than 5,000 UK companies and 4,000 British brands.

Food Minister George Eustice is attending Gulfood 2017 to champion the UK's world-class offer and strengthen the UK's trade relationship with this rapidly growing market. He said:

The UK already exports more than £550 million worth of food and drink to the Gulf and UAE, and it is clear buyers and producers from around the world are eager to see what we have to offer.

Over the next five years we have an ambitious plan to further our export success, and thanks to our range of exciting foods and delectable drinks on display today, we're strengthening our global reputation for tasty, good quality produce.

Food and drink exports recently hit the £20 billion mark for the first time, and the Government is committed to building on this success as part of the [International Action Plan for Food and Drink](#) – which sets out how we will drive global exports by £2.9 billion over the next five years.

Prima Cheese is part of this success story and already exports to the Middle East and South America. The Seaham based company has represented the UK at Gulfood for the past four years and recently expanded their workforce by 15 people to meet growing export demand.

Thanks to government support – which includes funding, expert training and exclusive networking opportunities – they will be part of the UK delegation joining 5,000 exhibitors at the annual five-day trade show, which kicked off yesterday (Sunday 26 February).

Operations Director Nima Beni said:

We've been coming to the Gulfood exhibition for the last four years and have found them to be our gateway to the world in terms to new

business.

They will be joined by luxury British tea brand, Newby Teas London, who are taking the next step in their global mission. They will be exhibiting at Gulfood for the first time to showcase their renowned range of loose teas to a global audience.

The London based company already exports tea to Dubai but are keen to strengthen their presence in the Gulf and increase exports to this growing market.

Britain is home to one of the most diverse and innovative food cultures in the world. We export British classics such as whisky and gin, salmon and seafood, specialist teas and cheeses to over 200 countries and territories.

Through the Government's [Food is GREAT](#) campaign, Defra is committed to driving exports of UK food and drink, opening new international markets and supporting UK companies in their work to go global.