

£27 million for farmers to boost productivity

Farmers will benefit from a £27 million pot to invest in productivity-boosting equipment as the Farming Investment Fund opens today (Tuesday 16 November).

From today farmers, foresters and growers from across England are urged to apply for [grants to buy new equipment and infrastructure](#) to help to improve efficiency and help us build back greener. This could include solar powered electric fences, water treatment systems that use ultraviolet light rather than chemicals and cameras for monitoring livestock.

The fund will be split across two strands. Firstly, the [Farming Equipment and Technology Fund](#) will focus on smaller grants for equipment from a set list, including electronic seeders and chemical-free disinfection systems. Secondly, the [Farming Transformation Fund](#) will cover more substantial technology, with the potential to transform business performance. This strand will focus initially on water management with grants available to improve water use on farms for things like crop irrigation and constructing on-farm reservoirs.

Farming Minister, Victoria Prentis said:

I'm pleased to offer support to eligible farmers through the new Farming Investment Fund to invest in technology and infrastructure to boost productivity and deliver environmental benefits.

Investing in new technology and equipment on farm has a real impact on productivity and yields, as well as a benefit for the environment as we build on the historic commitments of COP 26.

The farming industry will play a crucial role in helping this Government reach its [Net Zero ambitions](#) and today's announcement builds on a series of commitments in the Net Zero Strategy. This includes a £124 million boost to the Nature for Climate Fund, helping meet commitments to restore approximately 280,000 hectares of peat in England by 2050 and treble woodland creation in England by the end of this Parliament.

As set out in the [Agricultural Transition Plan](#), the Government is also introducing a range of reforms to incentivise sustainable farming practices, rewarding farmers for producing public goods such as better air and water quality, protecting wildlife, soil health and animal welfare.

As Direct Payments are phased out over the 7 year agricultural transition, the Government has committed to offer financial assistance to support farmers

to invest in their businesses to improve their productivity, manage the environment sustainably and deliver other public goods.

Farmers are also able to access business support through the Farming Resilience Fund. The fund awards grants to organisations so that they can support farmers and land managers who are in receipt of Basic Payment Scheme payments.

Rural Payments Agency Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

Innovation and technology have a real-life impact across the farming sector, so I'm delighted to be able to help unlock this potential for many farmers through the Farming Investment Fund. I know how popular these schemes are so I would encourage those eligible to make an application for this valuable support.

Eligible applicants involved in the production or processing of agricultural, horticultural or forestry products, who are based in England, can apply for a grant. Applicants are urged to make note of the differing deadlines for both strands of the fund.

The deadline for the [Farming Equipment and Technology Fund](#) is the 7 January 2022 at midday. Applications for the [Farming Transformation Fund can be made online](#) with a new online [eligibility checker](#) to improve the application process for these grants as applicants will be able to check in advance their project suitability in relation to the scheme objectives. Projects that score highly enough against the scheme objectives will be invited to make a full application. This will open from today until the 12 January 2022, with the deadline to complete full applications by 30 June 2022.

[Chancellor chairs G7 Finance Track meeting on cyber security](#)

News story

The Chancellor, today (16 November) chaired a virtual meeting with his international counterparts to agree shared priorities for continued work promoting the cyber security and resilience of the financial sector.



- Chancellor co-hosted a G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' meeting with Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey to discuss ongoing work to support cyber security in the global finance sector
- Meeting builds on the work of the G7 Cyber Expert Group – established as a forum for collaboration on critical cyber issues facing jurisdictions' financial sectors
- The UK's G7 Presidency ends in December, Germany will take on the Presidency in 2022

Rishi Sunak, Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors from the world's seven most advanced economies (G7) agreed to continue to work together to share expertise and minimise cyber risks.

The meeting builds on work led by the G7 Cyber Expert Group, a group of cyber security experts who identify and propose ways to ensure the financial sector is resilient to cyber threats. The group was established in 2015 and is comprised of G7 finance ministries, central banks and other suitable financial authorities such as the Financial Conduct Authority.

Ensuring that the G7's financial sectors continue to review and update their cyber security on a regular basis is important to ensure the sector remains well protected.

The UK's G7 presidency will end in December and Germany will take on the Presidency in 2022.

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Digital Secretary asks CMA to carry out further investigation into NVIDIA's takeover of Arm

- Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries orders Phase Two investigation on national security and competition grounds

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries has today written to the CMA instructing them to carry out an in-depth Phase Two investigation of the proposed acquisition of Arm by NVIDIA on competition and national security grounds.

The Digital Secretary has 'quasi-judicial' powers under the Enterprise Act 2002 to intervene in certain mergers on public interest grounds. Today's decision follows the completion of the [Phase One process](#) during which the CMA conducted an initial investigation of the potential competition implications of the transaction.

The CMA found the transaction raises the possibility of a "substantial lessening of competition across four key markets" – data centres, Internet of Things, the automotive sector and gaming applications. The full Phase One report has been published today.

In addition, following the consideration of evidence gathered from departments across government, the Secretary of State also deems that the interest of national security continues to be relevant and should be subject to further investigation.

Arm, which is headquartered in Cambridge, licenses semiconductor intellectual property and is a major player in the global semiconductor industry, with tens of billions of Arm-based chips used worldwide. The chips, based on Arm's intellectual property, power smartphones and are contained in a considerable proportion of connected devices within homes, cars and businesses. While not all individual devices relying on Arm-based chips are necessarily classed as 'critical' in themselves, the security and resilience of the broader supply chain is important for UK national security.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

I have carefully considered the Competition and Market Authority's 'Phase One' report into NVIDIA's proposed takeover of Arm and have decided to ask them to undertake a further in-depth 'Phase Two' investigation.

Arm has a unique place in the global technology supply chain and we must make sure the implications of this transaction are fully considered. The CMA will now report to me on competition and national security grounds and provide advice on the next steps.

The government's commitment to our thriving tech sector is unwavering and we welcome foreign investment, but it is right that we fully consider the implications of this transaction.

The CMA will now lead the Phase Two investigation covering both competition and national security. It will have 24 weeks (subject to a possible eight-week extension) to conduct this investigation and deliver a final report to the Digital Secretary.

Next steps

When the Digital Secretary has received the report, she must decide from the following options:

- to make an adverse public interest finding in relation to the acquisition on national security and/or competition grounds, and, if so, to take action to remedy any adverse effects to the public interest;
- to make no adverse public interest finding and refer the case back to the CMA to remedy any competition concerns identified.

ENDS

Notes for editors

- The Secretary of State may make a Phase Two reference to the Competition and Markets Authority under section 45(4) of the Enterprise Act 2002 if she believes that is or may be the case that: arrangements are in progress which, if carried into effect, will result in the creation of a relevant merger situation;
- the creation of that situation may be expected to result in a substantial lessening of competition within any market or markets in the UK for goods or services;
- the interests of national security (being the public interest consideration mentioned in the public interest intervention notice) are relevant to a consideration of the relevant merger situation concerned; and taking account only of the substantial lessening of competition and the interests of national security, the creation of the relevant merger situation may be expected to operate against the public interest.
- In September last year NVIDIA announced its intention to buy Arm in a deal valued at approximately \$40 billion.
- In April 2021, the previous Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport decided to issue a Public Interest Intervention Notice (PIIN) in respect of the acquisition.
- This instructed the CMA to carry out a Phase One investigation on both competition and jurisdictional issues. * Meanwhile, the Government has been carrying out an investigation on national security grounds.
- The ability to intervene in this fashion falls within the Digital Secretary's statutory powers under the Enterprise Act 2002.

- The Enterprise Act 2002's main purpose is to enable the Competition and Markets Authority to scrutinise and intervene in potentially anti-competitive mergers and acquisition activity.
- The Enterprise Act 2002 also allows the relevant UK Secretary of State to make a quasi-judicial decision to intervene in mergers under the following public interest considerations: national security; media plurality; the stability of the UK financial system; to combat a public health emergency.
- If the relevant Secretary of State decides to issue a PIIN, the Competition and Markets Authority and the relevant Government departments will investigate and prepare a report to assess the transaction in greater detail. If the relevant Secretary of State refers a merger on public interest grounds, he or she also takes the final decision on whether the merger operates, or may be expected to operate against the public interest, and on any remedies for identified public interest concerns.
- The ability to intervene in transactions on the grounds of national security within the Enterprise Act 2002 is being replaced by the National Security and Investment Act once it comes into force from January 4th 2022.
- As this intervention was announced before the NSI Act regime commenced, it continues to be assessed under the Enterprise Act 2002 regime.
- Instruction Set Architectures are the basic set of instructions which control how Central Processing Units – ordinarily the main processor executing instructions in a computer, phone or device – work. These systems determine the way in which Central Processing Units interpret and respond to each instruction and thus how software communicates with underlying hardware.

[Dr Jo Saxton speech at Federation of Awarding Bodies conference](#)

Good morning. I'm Jo Saxton. It's absolutely brilliant to be here with all of you in person.

I'm particularly pleased that it's with you, awarding organisations, that I get to share my first speech as Chief Regulator. It means a huge amount to me because it's in large part thanks to you that students and apprentices, despite the enormous challenges everyone has faced, have become qualified across a wide range of qualifications, disciplines and industries.

I intend to build on the new ways of working that have been forced upon us by the COVID-19 response. I intend to mark this as a new way of regulating and a new era of co-regulation.

An era in which – as far as it is possible to do so – we create the

environment in which you can innovate and evolve, so that those that we serve can be even better qualified, even better empowered for the next stages of their education and life. But this will only be attainable if we agree to head in the same direction, we need to be led by a common compass.

True north, for my tenure at Ofqual, will be students of all ages and apprentices. Why does this matter so much to me, and why do I care so passionately about qualifications?

We all know that the pandemic has exposed stark inequalities in society and in education like never before.

Now that we have seen these problems we can't 'unsee' them, and it's up to every one of us to make a difference. I know that you are already playing your part in doing that.

The profile of qualifications has never been higher – we have seen a growth in interest that started during the pandemic and we need to capitalise on that.

Just as an illustration: between April 2020 and March 2021, Ofqual's register of qualifications was viewed 63,000 times more than it had been in the previous year.

Of course, with increased interest comes increased expectation and we need to rise to that challenge collectively.

Education is good for us, we know that. The OECD has documented that quite literally the educated live longer than the uneducated, or the lesser educated. For example, a 30-year-old leaving education around 16 is likely to live 5 years fewer than a 30-year-old who has proceeded through tertiary education. So, although it might not feel like it at the time, education is good for us.

I'm an academic by background, yet I chose to work in some of England's toughest schools because I care that young people get the qualifications they need. Everyone deserves qualifications that will open doors for them, but the disadvantaged desperately need them. That's what really drives me.

This realisation was brought into sharp relief for me while working to improve a group of schools on the Kent coast. Outside the grammar schools outcomes were weak, as were secure employment opportunities for the disadvantaged; and this despite some household-name employers on the doorstep. So I went to talk to them; Eurotunnel, EDF, Port of Dover, among others.

What would it take, I asked, for you to give the management track jobs, the best paid, secure roles to local kids? In part the answer was: 'a working modern foreign language'. That single skill was the gateway to real-time digital engineering under the Channel, to chemical engineering, to collaborating with international colleagues.

Informed by this knowledge, and with a commitment from those employers for

working partnerships, I led a successful bid to open a brand new school for the area. One that would bring 'success without selection', that would educate local children to be knowledgeable and skilled – including with a modern foreign language – so that they could be the pick of recruits for these local employers.

When I think of the power of qualifications, I think particularly of a young, aspiring engineer that I knew, let's call him Paul.

When I first met him, his life was extremely challenging, and like many, he had caring responsibilities outside of education. He didn't appreciate at that time how critical his mathematics was to fulfil his aspirations; he was failing at it and he was also undermining the education of others. I sat down with him and we started to talk about his aspiration. Talking in detail about the qualifications he might take post 16 to fulfil this dream, the penny dropped for him that he really, really needed that maths to succeed in the post-16 courses he wanted to do. He agreed to engage with the additional support that the school could offer him and that he would stop undermining the education of others, and I'm pleased to report he's now a qualified and well-paid engineer.

Let me be clear, then, I see the role of a regulator as being champion for the vulnerable and for the disadvantaged. In the case of qualifications that means acting on behalf of students of all ages and apprentices; and especially those with particular protected characteristics.

Clearly Ofqual has a series of statutory responsibilities – I'm not going to rehearse these for you now – you know them well enough. But for me, just as important is Ofqual's unique position.

We have a key role to play influencing, shaping policy, making use of our expertise, the data we hold, and the unique oversight we have of the full regulated qualifications market.

As a sector it's right that we put our collective shoulder to the wheel to tackle the negative impact that the pandemic has had on society and on the economy. We need to improve productivity, support new technologies and address skills shortages. In the years to come, Ofqual will play its part in shaping the future of assessment and qualifications. One aspect of that is, of course, government reform of technical education and the qualifications reviews. Our focus here is going to be on ensuring that qualifications are both high quality and meaningful.

The second element of Ofqual's role that I really want to emphasise today is our ability to bring the sector together, and we do so in the interests of students and apprentices. This is our convening power – you might say.

Over the past 18 months you and Ofqual have engaged more as a regulated community than ever before. As regulator, Ofqual has worked with you to create an environment that is conducive to innovation. Many of you have seized the opportunity to harness technology to deliver innovative solutions.

Ofqual's ability to refine and reform its framework has supported and encouraged you to do that. There have been great examples of careful and considered implementation of remote invigilation, and new uses of remote assessment – both of which enabled students and apprentices to complete their qualifications and progress in their lives. I look forward, for one, to seeing much, much more of this student-focused innovation in the weeks, months and years to come.

Driven by the challenges of the pandemic, we've seen the positive effect of true co-regulation for the first time. We've seen first-hand that you can achieve more together than you can in isolation. We've seen that this is as good for you as AOs, as it is for students.

The work that was done together in relation to Functional Skills is an excellent example. Together we each played our part to deliver government policy, right in the eye of the pandemic. Ofqual reinforced the policy position through our regulatory framework, and this supported you to uphold it. You worked together to achieve a consistent approach and continued to deliver assessments in an unprecedentedly challenging environment. You made sure that those students who couldn't access assessments were able to get a result, nevertheless, to progress.

We assured government of your commitment to deliver, through our collection and presentation of your assessment data. For me, this is a blueprint of how we should work together for the future.

Where you work proactively with us, we can do our bit to make sure that our approach to regulation is right, that it is in the interests of students, and that we help to communicate and land that with students, centres, government and the public.

So I start my tenure recognising the pivotal role Ofqual must play in facilitating innovation, collaboration and driving up quality. We will continue to explore and use effective co-regulatory approaches. It's been great to already start to have that conversation with the Federation.

I encourage awarding organisations to discuss challenges and solutions, not only with us, but with each other; to address risks, define good practice. Let's do that together.

Ofqual may not always be able to provide all the answers, but we are very much part of the solution.

It is of course true that we need to continue to regulate effectively. Co-regulation is not to be confused with soft regulation. That wouldn't be in your interests, nor in those of students and apprentices.

You want to know where you make substantial investments into the quality of your products that we will intervene to prevent other regulated organisations from taking short cuts. You want us to hold you to the same high standard, so that together we can achieve a market where quality is the true competitive advantage.

I want the Ofqual 'kite-mark' to give additional confidence to students and apprentices choosing their next step, to employers making recruitment decisions. It should be clear to all users that a regulated end point assessment is the right way to go.

I'm grateful to the Institute for the milestone decision it took last year to establish a fully regulated apprenticeships system.

I'm confident that we will continue to have a thriving market of Apprenticeship End Point Assessment Organisations to meet both apprentice and employer needs. You can be confident that our recognition bar will not drop. Quality end point assessment can only be delivered by organisations that have the expertise, governance and resource to deliver.

I hope it's clear that my focus will be on quality for students of all ages and apprentices. Ofqual's greatest strength in regulating on their behalf lies in our independence.

Ofqual is independent of Ministers but works closely with officials to ensure that government policy is deliverable and effective.

Of course, we are also independent from you – our regulated community. Ofqual holds each of you to account for delivery. And I firmly believe that scrutiny helps to ensure a level playing field.

When we ask you for data we can use it to monitor your performance, yes, but we can also monitor the performance of your competitors. We can use that data to assure Ministers you are on track to deliver timely and reliable outcomes, and we use it to influence policy in everybody's interest.

The functional skills revisions are a really, really good example of that.

I spoke earlier of where my passion for qualifications comes from. All of us have a Paul who we've met along the way – perhaps it's your own story or your own qualifications that motivate you.

I'd like us each to hold our Pauls in mind; not to lose sight of them in the day to day of what we do. These have been extremely difficult times for everyone, but the power of working together in the interests of students – of all the Pauls that we've met and have yet to meet – should be what drives our decisions, our behaviours and our actions. They are our true north.

Thank you.

[Ofsted accelerates inspections for](#)

[schools and further education providers](#)

Press release

Ofsted has been asked by government to inspect all schools and further education (FE) providers by summer 2025, to give a quicker assessment of how well education is recovering from the pandemic.



Without this acceleration, funded through the government's [Spending Review](#), it would have taken a further year for all schools and college inspections to be completed.

This will mean parents and learners will get up-to-date assurance about the quality of education that their children or they are receiving. Schools, colleges and other FE providers will receive timely information to inform their improvement plans.

Beginning with last term's inspections, all schools and FE providers will be inspected at least once by summer 2025.

All college inspections from September 2022 up to September 2025 will be full, graded inspections; these are expected to be enhanced to take account of local skills needs. Schools will continue to receive either graded or ungraded inspections depending on their circumstances, as they do now.

Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector said:

Schools and colleges have worked tirelessly to teach and support children and learners, at a time when their education has been seriously disrupted.

Children only get one chance at school. Everyone working in education must do everything they can to give this generation the best possible chance to fulfil its potential. Ofsted will play its part – by giving parents and learners up to date information, and by helping schools and colleges shape their plans. I'm pleased that

we will now be able to reach all schools, colleges and apprenticeship providers by summer 2025.

1. The total extra funding for education inspections over the next 3 financial years, over and above Ofsted's current spend, is £23.85 million.
2. The inspection arrangements will be confirmed in due course, with additional details updated in Ofsted's schools and further education and skills inspection handbooks.

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