

Chancellor marks Help to Grow scheme launch with teach-in alongside business owners

- Chancellor visits Aston Business School to take part in government Help to Grow: Management lesson with small businesses leaders
- Programme gives 30,000 SMEs access to world-class business expertise on everything from financial management to marketing.
- Over 600 businesses have now signed up for the scheme with a further 10,000 registering interest

Rishi Sunak joined a class taking part in the government-funded management scheme at Aston Business School alongside small business owners to see first-hand how it is giving them the tools they need to innovate, grow and help drive the recovery from Covid.

The Chancellor delivered a talk to participants at the business school in Birmingham on the critical role small businesses can play in boosting UK productivity. He then took part in a group activity and led a discussion about their own business models and opportunities for growth.

The scheme, which was announced by the Chancellor at the March Budget and opened for applications in May, will give 30,000 SMEs access to world-class business expertise on everything from financial management to marketing, and is a pivotal part of the government's Plan for Jobs.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

Small businesses are key to our innovation and economy and will therefore be an essential part to our recovery from the pandemic, which is why we are levelling up their skills through the Help to Grow schemes.

I want to bring some of the best bits of management training from around the world to help boost productivity here in the UK.

Help to Grow: Management will ensure our brilliant SMEs seize every opportunity to grow, fuelling our Plan for Jobs by boosting productivity in all corners of the UK.

Five universities have already started to offer courses – Aston, Portsmouth, Derby, Nottingham, and Birmingham City. Over August, four universities will

follow – Coventry, Kingston, Strathclyde and Nottingham Trent.

The programme is being delivered by business schools across the country and was developed in close partnership with the business community to ensure it is as relevant as possible.

Leading business groups – including CBI, FSB, BCC, IoD and Make UK – have also played a key role in supporting the programme design.

According to the ONS, making small improvements in management practices can lead to a 10% increase in productivity. Analysis from the CBI suggests that boosting the productivity profile UK SMEs to match that of Germany could add up to £100bn to the economy.

Lord Karan Bilimoria, CBI President, said:

SME's have shown a real tenacity throughout the crisis, and innovation has often been at the heart of this. Help to Grow is a perfect way to capitalise on this newly found dynamism, productivity and digital adoption among businesses.

Management training, access to digital advice and supporting firms to make productivity-enhancing investments will help firms to scale up and reach the next level. I wish this first cohort every bit of success as they build a more profitable, resilient and productive businesses.

NatWest, Barclays and HSBC will support thousands of places on the executive training programme through combined funding of £2.75 million. They will also contribute their significant expertise to the curriculum, mentoring programme and alumni network. By playing an active role in promoting the scheme to their SME customers, the banks will help us ensure a wide range of businesses benefit from Help To Grow: Management.

In addition, an expert advisory council with senior representatives from Goldman Sachs, the CMI, Social Enterprise UK and the SME Micro-Fresh, is providing expert insight and external challenge to the design of the programme.

Mark Hart, member of the expert advisory council and Professor at Aston Business school, said:

The launch of the Government's Help to Grow: Management programme for SMEs is a welcome addition at a critical time to the range of support available to small business leaders across the UK.

Small firms will drive the recovery as they have always done in previous economic downturns and equipping their leaders with the leadership and management skills from the UK's leading business schools will ensure that they will build even more resilient,

innovative and sustainable businesses capable of responding to the emerging opportunities in their chosen markets.

This is a practical, intensive 12-week programme designed by some of our top academics to provide the skills required to improve the performance and productivity of small firms across all sectors of the economy.

Further information:

- [Pictures from today's visit](#) are available online
- [Businesses can apply for a Help to Grow course and view participating business schools online](#)
- The Help to Grow: Management Programme: offers a 12-week executive training programme to small business leaders, delivered by the UK's leading business schools and is a pivotal part of the government's Plan for Jobs.
- The scheme combines a practical curriculum with 1:1 mentoring from a business expert, peer-learning sessions to give businesses the opportunity to learn from one another, and an alumni network. By the end of the programme participants will develop a tailored business growth plan to lead their business to its full potential.
- The programme is being delivered by Small Business Chartered business schools across the UK. 30,000 places will be available over three years and courses will be added on a rolling-basis. The programme is being coordinated by the Chartered Association of Business Schools.
- [The LinkedIn live](#) is available to watch online.

[New planning requirements on fire safety come into force](#)

- New fire safety planning requirements have come into effect for relevant developments involving high-rise residential buildings
- Follows expert recommendation for fire safety to be considered at planning application stage

- Part of biggest changes to building safety regulation in 40 years

Residents will be safer in their homes thanks to new planning requirements that come into force this week (1 August 2021).

The new requirements, known as planning gateway one, will ensure that high-rise developments consider fire safety at the earliest stages of planning.

Developments involving high-rise residential buildings must demonstrate they have been designed with fire safety in mind before planning permission is granted – including through their site layout – and with access provided for fire engines.

This information will be submitted as part of the planning application in a fire statement.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

This is a key step in our progress towards a new, risk-based building safety regime that will ensure fire safety is prioritised at every stage in the development of high-rise buildings.

I am pleased to appoint the Health and Safety Executive as the statutory consultee, which will be on-hand to provide their expertise to local planning authorities on these important fire safety elements.

We are driving up the standards of safety for people's homes and our new regulator – to be introduced under the Building Safety Bill – will provide this essential oversight, from a building's initial design, to providing homes in the future.

Local planning authorities must seek specialist advice on relevant applications from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), as the statutory consultee on fire safety, before a decision is made on the application.

In future, this role is likely to become part of the new Building Safety Regulator – which, led by HSE, will oversee a new safety regime for high-rise residential homes.

Peter Baker, Chief Inspector of Buildings, at Health and Safety Executive said:

The introduction of planning gateway one is an important milestone in the journey to radically reform building safety so that residents are safe, and feel safe, in their homes.

It will ensure that fire safety is considered from the very beginning of a building's life and that developments benefit from integrated thinking on fire safety.

The Health and Safety Executive is now a statutory consultee for planning applications involving relevant high-rise residential buildings and will apply risk-based fire safety knowledge and expertise to evaluate planning applications. This will enable local planning authorities to make sound and informed decisions.

The changes to planning requirements follow a key recommendation made by Dame Judith Hackitt that fire safety in high-rise buildings should be considered at the earliest possible stage in the planning process, as set out in her panel's independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety.

It marks one of the first steps in the government's major overhaul of building safety regulation. On 5 July 2021 the Housing Secretary introduced the [Building Safety Bill](#) that will set a clear pathway for improved standards on how residential buildings should be constructed and maintained.

Planning gateway one will:

- involve the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) becoming a statutory consultee before permission is granted on certain developments which involve high-rise residential buildings
- help to inform effective decision-making by local planning authorities to ensure safety needs of the local community are met.

See the [guidance on planning gateway one](#).

See the [new fire statement forms for planning gateway one](#).

Certain planning applications will be [exempt from the new requirement to submit a fire statement](#).

Pre-application advice can be found on the [HSE website](#).

[Iranian Ambassador to UK summoned: MV Mercer Street attack](#)

Press release

Following the 29 July attack on MV Mercer Street, the Iranian Ambassador to the UK was summoned to the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office today.



The Iranian Ambassador to the UK was summoned to the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office today (2 August). This was in response to the unlawful attack on a merchant vessel off the coast of Oman on 29 July, in which a British national and Romanian national were killed.

A Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office spokesperson said:

The Iranian Ambassador to the UK, Mohsen Baharvand, was summoned today to the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office by the Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverly, in response to the unlawful attack committed on MV Mercer Street on 29 July.

Minister Cleverly reiterated that Iran must immediately cease actions that risk international peace and security, and reinforced that vessels must be allowed to navigate freely in accordance with international law.

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COP26 President visits Bolivia to build support for climate goals

Press release

Alok Sharma is visiting Bolivia today to stress the urgent action needed from all countries ahead of COP26



UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE UK 2021

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

- Alok Sharma to visit Bolivia to strengthen relationships ahead of crucial climate change summit in Glasgow
- Mr Sharma will meet President Arce along with industry and civil society
- The COP President-Designate will also visit a local community in the Amazon region

Alok Sharma, President-Designate of COP26, is visiting Bolivia today to stress the urgent action needed from all countries ahead of the crucial climate change summit in Glasgow, United Kingdom this November.

The visit follows Bolivia's participation in [critical climate talks](#) last week, where Mr Sharma brought 50 countries together in London, resulting in a renewed common mission for climate action.

Mr Sharma will underline the key COP goal of getting the finance flowing to climate action, which at last week's July Ministerial meeting saw Germany and Canada agree to take forward a delivery plan for mobilising the \$100bn a year from developed countries that is so critically needed to help others in their fight against climate change.

In Bolivia, Mr Sharma will meet President Luis Arce and Vice-president David Choquehuanca. He will also visit a local community in the Amazon region of Santa Cruz, and speak to indigenous community leaders, young people and grass-root organisations.

Ahead of the visit, Mr Sharma said:

I am delighted to be visiting Bolivia and Brazil this week, after both countries took part in the ministerial meeting I hosted in London last week for 50 countries.

During my visit I am keen to learn what both countries need, to help them come forward with climate action plans that are ambitious and keep the goal of limiting temperature rises to 1.5C alive.

And of course, to discuss how we can protect the Amazon – one of the jewels of the natural world, shared by both nations – by showing that a future of sustainable forestry is within our grasp if we work together to achieve it.

I have seen the willingness across the world to protect the planet

for future generations. COP26 is our last best chance to do so, and we must work together so that we do not lose this crucial opportunity.

Ends.

Notes to editors:

- Following his visit to Bolivia, Mr Sharma will travel to Brazil.

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[£1.5 million invested for CBR robotics and AI research](#)

The current wide area capability is based on specially adapted armoured Fuchs vehicles. For a number of years Dstl – the science inside UK defence and security – has been researching the potential of using autonomy and unmanned systems to survey areas for CBR materials.

This new investment with industry will help develop a concept demonstrator to be used in wide area experimental trials.

Dstl Project Lead, Ian Napier, said:

There is an understandable desire to remove the need for people to enter into hazardous areas, even if they are inside a protected vehicle.

Recent developments in autonomous ground and air vehicles offer up some exciting opportunities to develop autonomy for CBR work.

However, before making such a step change in our approach, we need to fully understand the variety of potential CBR scenarios and the tasks that may need to be undertaken by autonomous systems.

Dstl has already received great support and engagement from those within the military CBRN community. The project is now keen to expand out beyond MOD and see what industry can bring.

Dstl has contracted HORIBA MIRA Ltd to adapt a VIKING 6×6 uncrewed ground vehicle (UGV) and integrate a suite of chemical and radiological sensors supplied by Dstl. Making good use of open architectures should allow the

development of a CBR sensor suite on a standard 'pallet', which could then be mounted onto the appropriate platform as and when required.

The VIKING UGVs

Last year Dstl purchased 3 all-terrain VIKING 6×6 uncrewed ground vehicles, supplied by HORIBA MIRA, which are capable of carrying payloads of up to 750kg and using advanced AI-based autonomy with GPS-denied navigation.

These VIKINGS were purchased under project THESEUS for autonomous logistics resupply missions and are being used for early de-risking work to increase MOD's understanding of the capabilities and limitations of these systems in areas such as mobility, vulnerabilities and safety.

This new contract will now also fund the development of autonomy algorithms to allow the CBR sensor outputs to help drive the behaviour of the UGV, to detect and map areas of chemical or radiological hazards. One of the VIKINGS will undergo minor modifications to allow it to carry and interface with the CBR sensor pallet.

Andy Martin is the Dstl Technical Lead for the CBR Trials and Experimentation work package. He said:

This is a great opportunity for us to get a better understanding of the possible strengths and weaknesses of autonomous systems for CBR Recce and Survey. They appear well suited for dull and dangerous tasks. But can they fully replace manned systems, or are there some tasks where people are still required to be present?

The purpose of these trials is not to develop a prototype new system, it is to gather the evidence we need to determine what operational concepts are likely to be successful.

Andy Maloney, Chief Engineer for Defence and Unmanned Solutions at HORIBA MIRA, said:

We are delighted to be working again with Dstl, MOD stakeholders and front line users in this important area.

The project enables us to build upon our previous autonomous hazardous area survey work with small robots and leverage the capability of our much larger VIKING UGVs and their leading AI-based autonomy.

The concept demonstrator will include new sensors and autonomous behaviours, modular autonomous control equipment (MACE), the ATLAS GNSS denied navigation system and a user interface provided by our Base Station RAS management software.

The resulting system will enable significant sensor payloads to be carried over large areas at speed and new autonomous CBR survey concepts to be explored.