

# £700k investment to boost cyber growth across the UK

- Grant will boost regional growth and employment in cyber security sector
- Move will help UK cyber firms develop skills, collaborate and expand businesses

Cyber businesses across the country are set to benefit from a £700k fund to help develop people's skills, collaborate and break down local barriers to growth.

The funding – from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) – has been awarded to UK Cyber Cluster Collaboration (UKC3), a network of 20 regional clusters of cyber businesses, employers and local organisations which work together to boost the UK's cyber security sector.

The organisation was established to help cyber security businesses build partnerships and programmes which break down barriers to growth, such as skills gaps and a lack of business support, and provide a focal point for industry stakeholders to engage with.

The fund will be used by the UKC3 to provide opportunities for networking, knowledge sharing and funding to help develop skills and spur innovation.

Minister for Digital Infrastructure Matt Warman announced the new funding today at industry event InfoSec. He said:

Our cyber security sector is already worth £8.9 billion and we're working tirelessly to take its magnificent growth to the next level.

Our new UK Cyber Cluster Collaboration will help tackle the barriers to growth, boost people's digital skills and give firms a new route to develop their business acumen.

UKC3 Chair Richard Yorke said:

The UK's thriving cyber sector is recognised as world leading and through greater collaboration, innovation and skills development we have a real opportunity to deliver growth that benefits businesses and individual citizens across the UK.

This is an exciting and pivotal time for the cyber industry and we encourage organisations to engage with us to drive growth in the sector.

The funding is part of the government's wider work to develop the UK's

strength in cyber as we build back better after the pandemic and improve prosperity and security. Work is well underway to develop a new national cyber strategy, which the government intends to publish later this year.

### **Notes to editors:**

Contact the DCMS press office on 020 7211 2210.

### **Examples of cyber clusters across the UK include:**

The [CNI in Wales cyber security cluster](#) helps organisations share intelligence and tackle cyber security challenges in Critical National Infrastructure (CNI).

The [Women in Cyber Wales Cluster](#) provides networking opportunities and support to women working or hoping to work in the Welsh cyber sector.

The [ScotlandIS Cyber Cluster](#) represents and supports Scottish cyber security businesses and organisations, helping them to grow and collaborate.

The [North West Cyber Security Cluster](#) brings together cyber security and IT industry professionals and organisations across Cumbria, Lancashire, Manchester and Merseyside.

The [South West Cyber Security Cluster](#) is a 'not for profit' collaboration raising cyber security awareness for business protection, innovation and skills in the south west of England.

[NI Cyber](#) brings together cyber security companies based in Northern Ireland which are developing world-leading cyber security technologies.

[Full list of cyber clusters.](#)

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## **[The British Hallmarking Council is recruiting](#)**



Join the British Hallmarking Council for a chance to influence the future of an ancient and fascinating industry.

Hallmarking protects consumers by the assay (testing) of the precious metal content of an item such as jewellery. The jewellery industry in the UK is a vibrant area of the economy that employs 60,000 people with an £8 billion turnover and a strong international reputation.

The British Hallmarking Council has vacancies for 3 new Council members. These are public appointments and whilst they are non-paid roles, there is scope for reimbursement for travel, subsistence and other reasonable expenses. We're looking for people with a background in consumer protection, the precious metals trade, or someone keen to work in a board environment and/or regulator.

Meetings are held twice a year at the 4 UK Assay Offices: Birmingham, Edinburgh, London, and Sheffield, or by virtual means. You can contribute by monitoring and supporting the work of the UK Assay offices and their sub-offices, including on compliance with the Hallmarking Act.

Members of the British Hallmarking Council participate in promoting good relationships with and between: the Assay Offices; the trade; consumers and the government to ensure that hallmarking supports innovation and protects consumers.

The details of the vacancy, person specification and how to apply are on the public appointments website.

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1. 26 July 2021

The application deadline has been extended to Sunday 29 August 2021.

2. 13 July 2021

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## [UK and US extend carrier cooperation agreement](#)

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and his US counterpart Lloyd Austin have extended an agreement to enhance cooperation on aircraft carrier operations as they met in Washington.

The two met in Washington DC for a day of high-level talks on a range of shared security challenges, discussing the UK-US defence partnership, NATO, Afghanistan and the Carrier Strike Group.

UK-US defence cooperation is the broadest, deepest and most advanced of any two countries in the world, combining the biggest defence budget in the world with the biggest in Europe, and the pair discussed opportunities to further deepen that partnership.

Mr Wallace and Mr Austin extended an existing agreement covering Enhanced Cooperation on Carrier Operations and Maritime Power Projection, due to expire in January 2022, by an additional year.

It comes as UK and US forces make their way 26,000 nautical miles around the world as part of the UK-led Carrier Strike Group (CSG21), projecting reach and influence and reassuring allies with a series of over 70 engagements, joint exercises and operations.

### **UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:**

It was great to meet up with Lloyd Austin again after our meetings in London and Brussels.

The US continues to be the UK's most important defence partner and we are working together, across all domains, to confront future threats. There is much to do but the extension we agreed will ensure that we can cooperate even more seamlessly with our forces across the globe.

The extended agreement lays down guidelines to ensure the generation, training and operation of both nations' carrier forces are harmonised and effective, maximising and maintaining interoperability as both forces evolve and modernise to meet the threats of the future.

The unique interoperability of the UK and US carrier forces is demonstrated by the key role US forces are playing in the UK's current Carrier Strike Group deployment, CSG21. Nine ships, 32 aircraft and 3,700 personnel set sail in May, led by the UK's new aircraft carrier HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH, on the Strike Group's seven-month maiden operational deployment around the world.

The integration of US destroyer USS The Sullivans and ten Marine Corps F-35B jets into CSG21 shows our intent to further improve interoperability between NATO Allies as we jointly develop 5th generation carrier strike capability. The deployment is emblematic of how the US and UK work together to defend our shared values, uphold the rules-based international order and tackle the threats of the future.

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# DVLA and Home Office bring latest tech to police roadside checks

The technology to allow police to get instant access to a driver's photo at the roadside, in the case of motoring offences, has been developed by DVLA, as the agency delivers more services at the forefront of technology in government.

Supporting the focus on digitisation within law enforcement, DVLA has worked with the Home Office to give police officers access to the photograph held on DVLA's driver database at the roadside. This now means, in the case of motoring offences, officers can confirm the correct identity of a driver almost instantly. This technology is currently in use by 18 police forces with plans to roll out to a further 10 police forces across the UK in the coming weeks.

Without this technology, it can take up to 16 minutes for officers to confirm a person's identity as the officer often needs to spend additional time validating the information given by the driver as the truth. In some cases this can result in an arrest as the motorist is brought to the station to complete the checks.

While the use of DVLA data in this context is confined to motoring offences, the technology, which was first piloted in August 2019, has resulted in significant benefits to the police and motorists.

By June 2021:

- the technology has saved over 14,000 hours for Road Police Unit Officers and Local Policing Officers – meaning more time for patrolling, supporting investigations and community work
- roadside checks are now up to 66% faster meaning motorists can get back on the road quicker
- 86,513 driver licence images have been accessed by police support confirming the identity of motorists at the roadside

DVLA is working with the Home Office to roll-out the service to a total of 46 police forces across the UK.

This comes as the agency continues to develop digital solutions for motorists, including plans to introduce a digital provisional licence to assess the viability of a digital driving licence before looking to introduce a digital licence for full licence holders. During the pandemic, DVLA launched 3 new digital services offering customers quicker and easier ways to complete transactions.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

This government is constantly striving to be at the forefront of

technological advances and this particular development will not only free up valuable police time but also make sure innocent drivers can get back on their journeys quicker.

Julie Lennard, DVLA Chief Executive, said:

As a digital organisation we are always looking at ways to bring technological developments into the public domain – providing improvements that can directly benefit citizens.

The ability to support quicker and more robust roadside checks for motoring offences through the better use of technology is something we were pleased to help deliver.

Steve Thomson, National Law Enforcement Data Programme (NLEDP) Director said:

Working in partnership, the Home Office, policing and DVLA are showcasing new functionality demonstrating how we can provide access to integrated information by working across suppliers, departments and police forces.

The service is delivering tangible operational benefits to policing and to the public and in future, the Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS), will provide an enhanced suite of products and capabilities to support modern policing.

#### **Notes for editors:**

How it works:

The police officer will search the Police National Computer (PNC) to obtain the driving licence number. The driver number is a unique identifier which helps guarantee that the correct image will be accessed from the DVLA record. Using the driving licence number, the police officer will then receive the driving licence holder's photograph to complete the check. Driver images are only accessible during the enquiry and are not retained.

The use of DVLA data in this context is confined to roads policing.

Using the provisions of The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 and The Motor Vehicles (Access to Driver Licensing Records) Regulations 2001, police officers are able to gain access to driving licence records for the purpose of enforcing road traffic offences.

The 18 police forces currently using the technology are:

- Surrey
- Sussex
- Lancashire

- Leicestershire
- Lincolnshire
- Northamptonshire
- The City of London Police
- Police Scotland
- PSNI
- South Yorkshire
- Humberside
- Dyfed-Powys
- Gloucestershire
- West Yorkshire
- Devon and Cornwall
- Merseyside
- Dorset
- Derbyshire

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## [HMRC's performance during a unique year](#)

Today we have published [HMRC's quarter 4 performance update for 2020 to 2021](#) and our regular [monthly customer service and complaints update covering March 2021](#). These figures are subject to change until the final figures for 2020 to 2021 are published in our Annual Report and Accounts in Autumn 2021.

This was a unique year for HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), as we played a vital role at the heart of the government's coronavirus (COVID-19) response. Like other customer service organisations, we had to adapt quickly in March 2020 to the unprecedented environment and make choices about our work, whilst prioritising our service resources to deliver urgent government support to our customers. Our priorities since then have been clear:

- to protect livelihoods – through our delivery of the government's COVID-19 support packages
- to deliver the UK's smooth transition from the European Union
- to keep delivering the essential services that keep the tax system running

Any one of these priorities on their own would be a huge challenge for any service organisation. Throughout the pandemic we have worked to keep these requirements in balance and prioritised what our customers and ministers most needed from us.

### **Delivering coronavirus (COVID-19) support schemes**

Our rapid and efficient response to the pandemic protected jobs and incomes

and provided cash flow boosts for businesses. Our delivery of the government's COVID-19 support packages, like the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self Employment Income Support Scheme, has given financial support to millions of individuals and businesses.

By the end of financial year 2020 to 2021, HMRC enabled 1.3 million employers to claim £58 billion for over 11.4 million furloughed jobs through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

We also provided £24.5 billion of support to the self-employed, with almost 8.8 million claims made through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (Figures up to 9 May 2021 – see [more statistics on COVID-19 support schemes](#)).

We built the services from scratch in under 6 weeks, and payments across both schemes were made within 6 days of customers making an online claim. The 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme we administered in summer 2020 was taken up by 78,000 venues across the UK, supporting 160 million meals and paying the participating businesses across the hospitality sector within 5 working days.

For customers who needed to speak to us, we also opened a COVID-19 helpline on 16 March 2020. It handled 2.5 million customer calls across all its lines by the end of the financial year – ranging from helping those worried about paying their tax due to the pandemic to answering questions about the various government support schemes.

We deployed more than 5,000 customer advisers onto the helpline at the start of the pandemic and continued to prioritise this service. By the end of the first quarter of 2020 to 2021, customers experienced an average waiting time of 3 minutes and 6 seconds and by the end of quarter 4, this had reduced to 1 minute and 16 seconds. The COVID-19 helpline also handled around half a million webchats and delivered an overall customer satisfaction rating of 95%.

## **Delivering the UK's transition from the EU**

31 December 2020 marked the end of the UK transition period. In our preparations, we trained nearly 3,000 colleagues in more than 50 systems and processes – our biggest ever single remote training programme.

We published almost 600 guidance updates and engaged with businesses to make sure that they were prepared for the end of the transition period.

We also delivered new border customs facilities and pop-up sites in key locations, designed a grant scheme to be used flexibly by the customs intermediary sector to increase their capacity, and introduced the Trader Support Service to help businesses required to operate under the Northern Ireland Protocol. Over 36,000 traders have registered with the Trader Support Service, which has processed around 359,000 declarations.

Since the end of the UK transition period, we have:

- kept goods moving across our borders quickly and efficiently – including



essential supplies to help deal with the pandemic like hospital equipment, PPE and vaccines

- kept our clearance times within target: 95% within 2 hours and 100% within 4 hours
- introduced a new out of hours service providing 24/7 support for urgent border issues

We also expanded the capacity of our customs and international trade helpline, allowing us to answer more than 70,000 calls since the beginning of 2021, with an average speed of answer of less than 5 seconds in both February and March 2021

## **Improving customer experience**

We're proud to have delivered on these ministerial priorities swiftly and effectively at a time of national crisis. At the same time, we have successfully ensured that our core services kept running throughout the pandemic. We continued to collect revenue for public services and deliver vital benefits for families, whilst taking a sympathetic approach to customers struggling to pay their tax.

We saw record high customer satisfaction with our digital services; 85.2% on average across the financial year (83.3% in quarter 4). We also introduced a range of new digital services over the course of the pandemic, like digital stamps to avoid paper handling, a virtual assistant to handle routine Self Assessment and tax credits queries like password resets and payment date queries, and we've increased our webchat capability, handling more than 3 million chats in 2020 to 2021, compared to 1 million in 2019 to 2020.

To further support customers during the pandemic, we made multiple tax policy changes and clarifications, including deferring Income Tax payments for Self Assessment customers and VAT bills for UK businesses.

During this time, we saw changes in the demands on our services, which required us to flexibly deploy and train colleagues to deal with spikes in demand. One example is P87 claims, which include working from home expenses, where we have received a 70% increase in claims compared to the same period last year.

The complexity of dealing with these claims, as well as extra post items related to repayments and other COVID-19 related issues, resulted in longer post turnaround times in the second half of the year, despite an overall reduction of 9% in demand for our post services across the year.

In quarter 4, we received 9.6 million calls overall – 2 million more than in the third quarter of the financial year. On average, calls were answered in 15:23 minutes, which is longer than the average waiting time of 12:04 minutes over the whole financial year. This falls short of the high standards we want to deliver, and we're sorry about the inconvenience this has caused to people at busy times.

A comparison of the performance figures for our individual helplines shows

the reasons for this increase. Customers for tax credits, Child Benefit and Tax-Free Childcare experienced a service that was broadly in line with a normal year. For example, the average speed of answer was 6:53 for tax credits helpline in March 2021, compared with 6:49 in March 2020. Across the year, we successfully managed the annual peaks for these services.

However, the impact of our need to prioritise was more keenly felt on our PAYE and Self Assessment services. While we successfully supported 10.7 million customers to file their returns at the Self Assessment peak – with nearly 96% doing so online – our telephony service for these customers was not as strong as we would have liked.

The skills and capabilities needed to help customers with the COVID-19 support schemes are the same vital skills that we use for our PAYE and Self Assessment services. We took the conscious choice to divert those skilled advisers to providing COVID-19 support because that is what individuals and small businesses needed from us most urgently at a time of acute crisis.

By the end of quarter 4, PAYE and Self Assessment customers were typically experiencing average call waiting times of 28 minutes, compared to 9 minutes in 2019 to 2020. These are among the largest telephone services that we deliver, so they inevitably impact our overall telephony performance figures.

## **Collecting revenue and managing tax compliance**

In the unprecedented circumstances of 2020 to 2021, we worked to strike a careful balance between bringing in revenue for the UK's public services, maintaining a fair and level playing field for all and prioritising customer support to protect viable businesses as much as possible.

We took a common-sense approach to individual circumstances and sought to act in a fair and even-handed way with individuals in uncertain financial circumstances or viable businesses that might otherwise not survive the pandemic. Where people could not pay their tax, we allowed them to defer payment, and to pay off their debts over time in affordable instalments. Where people could not deal with our compliance enquiries, we deferred these if possible.

Despite the challenges of the year, we collected £191 billion in tax during quarter 4, which is more than the £176.4 billion collected during the same period in 2020. By the end of the financial year, we had collected £585 billion in tax – lower than the £633.4 billion collected last financial year (figures are on a cash basis and rounded to the nearest £ million and are aligned to those published in HMRC's tax receipts and National Insurance contributions for the UK), but broadly in line with forecasts made by the Office for Budgetary Responsibility.

Compliance yield – additional revenue from our compliance activity – generated during quarter 4 was £14.2 billion and the total compliance yield at the end of the financial year was £31.3 billion. By the end of last financial year, compliance yield was £36.9 billion, although this was skewed by a small number of very large, one-off successful cases during 2019 to

2020.

The pandemic also had some impact on our debt balance, but much of this was due to the choices the government made to support customers by temporarily deferring payments. The VAT deferral scheme, for example, allowed businesses to defer almost 600,000 payments of VAT, which helped them through the pandemic. By the end of March 2021, we also had 864,000 Time To Pay arrangements in place to support customers to pay what they owe in an affordable way.

At the end of the financial year we held £57.5 billion of debt – around £35 billion more than this time last year but £8 billion less than at the end of the third quarter of 2020 to 2021.

More than half of this debt balance was made up of deferred VAT debt (approximately £31.3 billion which became due either on 31 March 2021 or when the VAT New Payment Scheme closed at the end of June 2021) and Self Assessment Payment on Account (approximately £6.6 billion which became due on 31 January 2021).

## **Looking ahead**

Our immediate priority for customers will be to continue to support them with the economic impact of the pandemic, through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (both of which have been extended to September 2021) and other measures to support people while the economy recovers.

As the UK builds back better, we will do all that we can to help businesses and individuals get back on their feet and get the economy moving again, whilst ensuring the right tax revenue comes in and protecting the tax system and individuals from fraudulent attack. Our approach to increasing compliance activity will continue to be informed by customers' individual circumstances, particularly if they are still severely affected by the effects of the pandemic.

We will also carry on supporting businesses adjust to the changes to trading rules following UK transition, so they can continue to compete successfully on the global stage.

We recognise the immense pressure that many people are facing at this time and we are doing everything we can to help our customers. We are already seeing improvements in our customer service levels – for example, the percentage of calls answered has risen consistently since the start of 2021 to 2022 and in June reached the highest rate for more than a year.

We expect to see further improvements as we emerge from the pandemic and further rebalance how we prioritise our resources.

Our message to customers is simple: if you can pay your taxes then you should do so – but if you're struggling, we want to work with you to agree a plan based on your financial position.