

New £210 million centre to create jobs of the future with AI and quantum computing

- New centre launched in partnership with IBM to cement quantum and artificial intelligence (AI) expertise
- £210 million investment over 5 years will give public and private sectors access to cutting-edge computing to boost innovation
- Centre will support 60 new scientific jobs in Liverpool City Region

The Hartree National Centre for Digital Innovation (HNCDI), based at the Science and Technology Facilities Council's (STFC) Daresbury Laboratory in the Liverpool City Region, will create vacancies for an additional 60 scientists and opportunities for students to gain invaluable hands-on experience.

The centre – a partnership between STFC and IBM – will bring together world-leading expertise in artificial intelligence (AI) and quantum computing to support the application of the cutting-edge technologies in industry and the public sector.

Possible industry applications of quantum computing include optimising complex logistics such as picking and packing orders in large warehouses for supermarkets; traffic routing; energy distribution; improving design and manufacturing processes across automotive sectors.

The government will invest £172 million over 5 years through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), with an additional £38 million being invested by IBM. £28 million of the government's investment will be in the first year.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway:

Artificial intelligence and quantum computing have the potential to revolutionise everything from the way we travel to the way we shop.

This fantastic new partnership with IBM will not only help businesses get ready for the future of computing, but create 60 jobs in the region – boosting innovation and growing the economy as we build back better from the pandemic.

The HNCDI will make cutting-edge technologies like AI and quantum computing more accessible to businesses and public sector organisations.

As well as breaking down practical barriers to using new technologies, for example by providing access to equipment and infrastructure, the team of experts at HNCDI will also provide training and support to make sure the UK

is at the forefront of the next generation of computing.

Dario Gil, Senior Vice President and Director, IBM Research:

The world is facing grand challenges which demand a different approach towards science in computing, including AI and quantum computing, to engage a broad community across industry, government, and academia to accelerate discovery in science and business.

This partnership establishes our first Discovery Accelerator in Europe driven by our two UK-based IBM Research locations in Hursley and Daresbury as they contribute to our global mission of building discovery-driven communities around the world.

The technologies that have transformed our lives – the building blocks of modern computers, the mobile phone, the laser, the MRI scanner – are all products of quantum science. This involves harnessing the unique ways that light and matter behave at tiny atomic or subatomic levels.

A new generation of quantum technologies exploit breakthroughs in the way that we are able to precisely manipulate and measure these special properties, to engineer quantum devices – like sensors and computers – with dramatically enhanced functionality and performance.

The centre will work across sectors including materials, life sciences, environment and manufacturing. This will include collaboration with academic and industrial research communities, including start-ups and SMEs, public sector, and government.

Professor Mark Thomson, Executive Chair of STFC:

The HNCIDI programme will foster discovery and provide a stimulus for industry innovation in the UK.

By allowing industry to access a ready-made community of digital experts and cutting-edge technology, it will provide momentum for new ideas and solutions.

This programme has the potential to transform the way UK industry engages with AI and digital technologies, to the benefit of not just research communities but all of society.

Notes to editors

About the Hartree National Centre for Digital Innovation (HNCIDI)

The HNCIDI aims to:

- Turn ideas into practical digital solutions to maximise benefit for UK industry

- find the right technologies needed for projects to succeed and make businesses more competitive
- provide training and skills to staff, in order to take full advantage of digital technologies
- support industry investment in emerging technologies to make businesses more resilient

STFC Hartree Centre

The Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) Hartree Centre's mission is to transform UK industry through high performance computing, data analytics and AI technologies. As part of UK Research and Innovation, the Hartree Centre is home to some of the most advanced computing, data and AI technologies in the UK.

From early stage SMEs to international corporations, Hartree Centre experts work with industry and the research community to address real life challenges and accelerate the adoption of high performance technologies, delivering transformative gains in performance, productivity and time to market.

About IBM

IBM is a leading global hybrid cloud and AI, and business services provider, helping clients in more than 175 countries capitalise on insights from their data, streamline business processes, reduce costs and gain the competitive edge in their industries. Nearly 3,000 government and corporate entities in critical infrastructure areas such as financial services, telecommunications and healthcare rely on IBM's hybrid cloud platform and Red Hat OpenShift to affect their digital transformations quickly, efficiently and securely. IBM's breakthrough innovations in AI, quantum computing, industry-specific cloud solutions and business services deliver open and flexible options to our clients. All of this is backed by IBM's legendary commitment to trust, transparency, responsibility, inclusivity and service.

Discounted homes for key workers and local residents as flagship First Homes scheme launches

- Scheme to help local young people and key workers on to the housing ladder launches near Bolsover
- 'Own Your Home' campaign launched to highlight the support available to get people on to the housing ladder.

Discounted houses for local people and key workers will be made available as

a new housing scheme launches today (4 June 2021).

The First Homes scheme will help local first-time buyers – many of whom will be key workers like NHS staff and veterans – onto the property ladder by offering homes at a discount of at least 30% compared to the market price.

That same percentage will then be passed on with the sale of the property to future first-time buyers, meaning homes will always be sold below market value – benefitting local communities, key workers, and families for generations to come.

The scheme will support local people who struggle to afford market prices in their area, but want to stay in the communities where they live and work.

The first First Homes properties went on the market today as part of the first phase of an early delivery project in the Bolsover district, East Midlands, with the Housing Secretary in attendance.

Further sites are set to launch across the country in the coming weeks. A further 1,500 will enter the market from the autumn, with at least 10,000 homes a year being delivered in the years ahead and more if there is demand.

Delivery of the scheme is part of the government's wider pledge to build one million new affordable and attractive homes in this Parliament and help put home ownership within reach for people across the country.

Major high-street lenders Halifax and Nationwide Building Society, along with local building societies and community lenders, announced that they will be offering high loan-to-value mortgages against First Homes to support the roll-out of the scheme.

First Homes follows on from the 95% mortgage guarantee scheme which helps first-time buyers secure a mortgage with just a 5% deposit and the government's 'Own Your Home' campaign showcasing the range of flexible home ownership options available.

The campaign highlights the support available to help make home ownership a realistic and affordable option for more people than ever.

Broadcast, digital and radio adverts are showcasing the range of government schemes available to aspiring home-owners to help them get their foot on the housing ladder.

First-time buyers can find the right scheme for them via the [Own Your Home website](#) which provides a single gateway for all routes to home ownership.

The website is an easy and accessible way for first-time buyers to start their home ownership journey and find the right government scheme for them.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Enabling more people to buy their own homes is at the heart of the

mission of this government, and First Homes will offer a realistic and affordable route into home ownership for even more people who want to own their own home.

Thanks to First Homes, we will offer more homes to local people and families, providing a route for first-time buyers to stay in their local areas rather than being forced out due to rising prices.

First Homes will also support our fantastic key workers who are looking to get their first foot on the housing ladder – from front-line doctors and nurses to delivery drivers and supermarket staff – by giving many of them the chance to buy a home at a 30% discount.

These homes will be locked in for perpetuity to first-time buyers and key workers from their local area – making them an asset to both their owners and the wider local community.

Tim Beale, CEO of Keepmoat Homes, said:

We are delighted to be working with our partners in government, Homes England and Bolsover District Council, to launch the First Homes scheme which is specifically designed to support first time buyers and keyworkers and help them take their first steps on the property ladder.

Keepmoat Homes is one of the UK's leading home-builders for first time buyers so it is great to be part of this initiative which will help even more people realise their dream of owning their own home. This is a true example of how working in partnership helps to support local people and communities.

David Postings, CEO of UK Finance, said:

Key workers have kept the country running during the pandemic and we are committed to doing what we can to help them, and other local first-time buyers across England, to realise their dreams of owning their own homes.

Our commitment is shared across all necessary stakeholders, as underscored by the high level of co-operation between lenders, government, local authorities and developers in helping drive the First Homes scheme forward.

Robin Fieth, Chief Executive of the Building Societies Association, said:

Building societies have always been dedicated to bringing home ownership within reach for as many people as possible, which is why we are working with the sector to help bring forward mortgages for

First Homes as soon as possible.

Building societies, both large and small, are pleased to be among the first lenders to offer mortgages in support of this new product.

Councils will also be able to prioritise the homes for key workers such as nurses and teachers who have been looking to get on the housing ladder while supporting their community throughout the pandemic.

Each individual local authority can set a local connection test to determine who should be prioritised for the scheme based on the needs' of their communities.

Additionally the government has made available a further £40 million package to local councils to help level up local communities.

This includes £20 million of capital funding for the 70 successful bids for the Land Release Fund (LRF) and £10 million of resource funding from the One Public Estate (OPE) programme which is delivered in partnership between MHCLG, the Cabinet Office and the Local Government Association.

The LRF funding will release council-owned land for more than 2,600 homes over the next two years by helping to regenerate mainly brownfield land across the country which is often unused and derelict.

Councils are also being supported to release their brownfield land for housing through the £75 million Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF) of which up to £25 million will support self and custom build projects.

Meanwhile, the package also includes a £9.1 million fund for local authorities to support the delivery of garden communities in areas such as Chelmsford, Dunsfold and Corby. Overall, the Garden Community programme has the potential deliver over 350,000 new homes by 2050.

Funding will help unlock land to help deliver more new homes and vibrant communities for people to live and work in.

Meanwhile, reforms are being made to give powers to development corporations to support regeneration and growth in all areas of the country.

£2.8 million awarded to Carlisle, Exeter, Tewksbury and the Wirral to develop proposals to unlock significant numbers of homes and jobs through the New Development Corporation Competition (NDCC).

The publication of the [government's response to the technical consultation on Development Corporation Reforms](#) to ensure that development corporations have the powers to unlock strategic development in all parts of the country.

First Homes

First Homes will be for first-time buyers only, and councils will be able to

prioritise them for local people and for key workers. This scheme is a part of the government's commitment to deliver 1 million homes by 2024.

First Homes will make a proportion of new homes available with a minimum 30% discount on the open market value which will be passed on with the sale of the property to future first-time buyers. This means homes will always be sold below market value and local communities will benefit for generations to come.

The government working with several regional and national lenders to deliver the first of these homes in Bolsover and elsewhere in England.

The first 'First Homes' will be marketed over the summer of 2021, and the government will be funding a further 1,500 homes to come to the market from the end of 2021.

The following banks and building societies have announced their participation in the First Homes scheme, agreeing to provide 95% loan-to-value mortgages for First Homes:

1. Chorley Building Society
2. Darlington Building Society
3. Halifax
4. Leeds Building Society
5. Mansfield Building Society
6. Nationwide Building Society
7. Newcastle Building Society

A number of Britain's top lenders have lent their support to the scheme, publishing a [joint statement](#) (PDF, 171 KB, 2 pages)

Government home ownership schemes

95% Mortgages

The mortgage guarantee scheme allows first time buyers to purchase a home with only a 5% deposit. The scheme will help to increase the supply of 5% deposit mortgages for credit-worthy households by supporting lenders to offer these products through a government-backed guarantee.

Help to Buy: Equity Loan

Is a loan from the government that you put towards the cost of buying a newly built home. Help to Buy aims to help first-time buyers to get on the property ladder. If you're eligible for an equity loan, you can borrow up to 20% (40% if you're in London) of the market value of a new home. When you take out an equity loan, you only pay interest on the amount you borrowed.

Shared Ownership

Gives first time buyers the option to buy a share of their home (between 10% and 75%) and pay rent on the remaining share. Our new Affordable Homes Programme aims to deliver around 180,000 homes with around half of these

available to purchase through shared ownership.

We are making shared ownership more accessible by reducing the initial share you can buy in your new home from a quarter to 10% and allowing you to increase your share in 1% instalments. This means that you can increase your share of the property in manageable payments when you want, at a pace that is right for you

Help to Build

Scheme to help self and custom home building become a realistic option to get onto the housing ladder through lower deposit mortgages. Lowering the required deposit will free up capital, so people can build the home that they want and need whether it's a commissioned, made to order home, or a new design from scratch. The scheme will provide an equity loan on the completed home, similar to the Help to Buy: Equity Loan scheme.

Environmental and humanitarian risks of SAFER oil tanker

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We continue to insist on Syria's full cooperation with OPCW

I thank Director-General Arias and Ms Nakamitsu for their briefing today. This is the third time the Director-General has briefed the Security Council in the last two years. This underlines the Council's enduring concern at the use of these banned weapons and also the importance the Director-General places on dialogue and collaboration between the Council and the OPCW.

We thank the Director-General for the work of the various teams of the Technical Secretariat set out in his monthly reports to the Council. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic and the intense scrutiny under which the

Technical Secretariat operates, it is clear that the OPCW continues to implement the duties conferred on it objectively and professionally, and to prioritise dialogue, cooperation, discretion and candour with the Syrian authorities and OPCW States Parties.

The UK's position on this issue is well-known and I'd like to underline three points:

First, we remain deeply concerned by the unresolved issues in Syria's initial chemical weapons declaration, which now stands at 20. Coupled with the independent findings of the UN and the OPCW, which, with the latest IIT report, have now attributed eight chemical weapons attacks to the Syrian regime, it is clear that Syria retained a chemical weapons capability and the willingness to use it after 2013.

Second, the retention of this capability means there is an ongoing risk of further use of chemical weapons. Given the unaccounted for whereabouts of significant amounts of chemical agents and munitions, there is also the potential for those weapons to fall into the hands of other groups with an intent to use them.

Third, and for this reason, we will continue to insist on Syria's full cooperation with the OPCW in accordance with resolution 2118, and on the full and verified destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme, so that the ongoing threat to international peace and security can be neutralised to the satisfaction of the international community.

I'd like to take advantage of the Director-General's presence to ask two questions, if I may.

First, UNSCR 2118 requires Syria to "cooperate fully". How do you assess the cooperation of the Syrian Arab Republic? After seven years of work and 20 unresolved issues in Syria's Declaration, what are the next steps and what more is required to start to reduce the number of issues and move towards a resolution?

Second, with regard to the methodology of the Investigation and Identification Team, could you set out the starting point of the investigation as well as how the team gathers evidence and conducts the investigation? Does it simply accept the Fact-Finding Mission's findings or does it re-interrogate them?

Thank you Mr President.

[New international alliance to preserve](#)

Peruvian Amazon rainforest

Ministers from these countries joined Peru by signing a Joint Declaration of Intent this week, demonstrating their support to Peru in tackling forest ecosystem loss and degradation, and contributing to the sustainable development of the country.

In 2014, Germany and Norway entered a partnership to support Peru in its effort to preserve its tropical forest, the fourth largest in the world and the largest in the Amazon outside of Brazil. Today's declaration is a continuation of [the original declaration from 2014](#). The United Kingdom and United States are both signing for the first time as new partners.

The UK is working closely with Peru to pursue sustainable and forest-friendly business solutions such as Indigenous communities-led agroforestry in the Amazon area. To build back better after the Covid-19 pandemic and make a successful shift away from deforestation and forest degradation, the [UK International Climate Finance programme](#) is supporting Peru to mobilise private sector investment for nature-based solutions that can help to effectively tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.

The United States, represented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), signed this agreement as a witness, bringing support through a 47.5 million US Dollar program directed towards sustainable forest practices currently under implementation.

Germany have already committed 210 million Euros to projects that are linked to the objectives of the Joint Declaration of Intent. By signing the extension, Germany will continue supporting the Joint Declaration of Intent and stands ready to further develop the significant cooperation with Peru.

Norway will extend its pledge from the initial declaration in 2014 until 2025, which is to support Peru's effort with up to 1800 million Norwegian Krone – more than 200 million US Dollars.

Lord Goldsmith, British Minister for Pacific and the Environment at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, said:

I am delighted the UK is taking steps to strengthen our partnership with Peru to work together on halting deforestation and protecting biodiversity. Through our leadership of the G7 and COP26, we are putting nature at the heart of the global response to the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change. This is why we have committed to spend at least £3 billion of our International Climate Finance to support efforts to protect and restore nature, reduce global deforestation, and support communities that rely on forests for their livelihoods.

Gabriel Quijandría Acosta, Peruvian Minister for the Environment, said:

Climate change is a global threat, and addressing it requires international collaboration. With the support of our partners, Peru reiterates its commitment to protecting our invaluable forests and promoting sustainable development in the Amazon region.

Representatives of regional governments, ministries of State and representatives of indigenous peoples of Peru agreed that this addendum represents an excellent opportunity to promote the productive conservation of forests and implement the country's climate commitment with a sense of urgency and ambition.

Svenja Schulze, German Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, said:

Germany sees the Joint Declaration of Intent on climate change and REDD+ as a strategic foundation on which we can build cooperation on forest conservation and climate action. We are united by a shared belief which goes beyond borders and institutions: Thriving economies and healthy ecosystems are interdependent.

Sveinung Rotevatn, Norway's Minister of Climate and Environment said:

We are very proud to partner with Peru. Despite being severely affected by the pandemic, Peru continues the fight against climate change and to preserve its forests. We are also thrilled to have the United States and the United Kingdom join forces with us.

We are keen to support Peru and other countries that succeed in reducing deforestation in their efforts to access more finance. I am hopeful we can invite a growing set of companies to join, building on last month's launch of [the LEAF Coalition](#).

Jene C. Thomas, Director of the United States Agency for International Development's Peru Mission, said:

The recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between USAID and the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Economy and Finance, and the President's Council of Ministers, calls for increased cooperation around forest governance and reforms at national and regional levels, and is an important tool that will fortify Joint Declaration of Intent goals and further harmonize Government of Peru's whole of government efforts.

Last month, the Climate and Environment Ministers of the G7 committed to halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity by 2030. This follows the Environment Secretary's recent commitment to a historic new legally-binding species target for 2030. In efforts to tackle the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, all G7 members also signed up to the global '30x30' initiative to conserve or protect at least 30 per cent of the world's land and at least 30 per cent of the world's ocean by 2030, as well as committing to '30x30' nationally.