

Business Secretary appoints Indro Mukerjee as new Innovate UK CEO

- Indro Mukerjee appointed as new CEO of Innovate UK, the government's innovation agency
- he will be tasked with developing the UK's innovation capability, and driving investments in research and development (R&D) and technologies of the future
- the new appointment underlines efforts by UK government to harness business-led innovation to help build back better from the pandemic

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng has today (Wednesday 5 May 2021) announced the appointment of Indro Mukerjee as the new Chief Executive of Innovate UK, the UK's innovation agency.

Indro Mukerjee is a highly experienced technology executive and business leader with a track record of leading innovation and technology commercialisation at businesses of all sizes across the world – from publicly listed and multinational corporations to new venture and private equity backed technology companies.

Mukerjee will take up the post immediately and will be tasked with transitioning Innovate UK from a grant funding body to an agency focused on driving economic growth by working with companies to de-risk, enable and support innovation, while unleashing private sector investment into research and development. As part of this, he will develop and implement strategies for investments that promote the UK as a global leader in R&D and technologies of the future, while cementing the UK's place as a global science superpower.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

I want innovation to be at the heart of our efforts to build back better, and to achieve this we need strong leadership from experienced innovators, with business know-how, who can help unleash the UK's vast scientific and technological potential.

Along with his passion for science and technology, Indro boasts impressive credentials having worked at the top tier of businesses of all sizes and across different industries. I look forward to working closely with him at the helm of Innovate UK, which will be a crucial vehicle in accelerating business-led innovation and technology, driving economic growth, creating high-value jobs and cementing the UK's status as a science superpower.

I also want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Indro's predecessor Ian Campbell, who has left a fantastic legacy at the organisation to build upon in the years ahead.

Innovate UK CEO Indro Mukerjee said:

Throughout my career, I have had a strong personal passion for the journey from scientific discovery through to innovation and ultimately commercialisation of technology. I have seen that journey at first hand across many settings, industries, countries and types of business. I will use this experience as I lead Innovate UK and work with the Secretary of State to deliver the government's innovation strategy.

The appointment comes at a time when innovation is being recognised as a key driver of the UK's post-pandemic growth strategy, with Innovate UK set to play a strategically important role and build closer connections with industry.

Since 2007, Innovate UK has invested around £2.5 billion to help businesses across the country to innovate, with match funding from the private sector taking the total value of projects above £4.3 billion.

The agency has also helped 8,500 organisations create around 70,000 jobs and added an estimated £18 billion of value to the UK economy.

Mukerjee will play an important role in ensuring the government's fulfils its commitment to increase R&D spend across the economy to 2.4% GDP by 2027.

Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser said:

Indro's vast experience and expertise working in technology and industry will be a real asset for Innovate UK and UKRI as a whole. Innovation matters more than ever before, and I look forward to working closely with him to deliver our vision of a flourishing research and innovation system.

The appointment was approved by the Secretary of State for BEIS following a comprehensive and open recruitment process.

Biography

Indro Mukerjee is an experienced CEO with board-level leadership experience in publicly listed, corporate multinational, new venture and private equity backed fast-moving technology and industrial companies.

Previously CEO of Watchstone Group plc – brought in by institutions to stabilise and reshape a high-profile company operating in insurance, telematics and healthcare software and services; Plastic Logic plc – restructured major venture capital-backed disruptive electronics company and created FlexEnable Ltd. spin out; C-MAC MicroTechnology Ltd. – private equity backed LBO from which he built and sold three successful high technology

companies operating in aerospace/defence, automotive and communications markets.

Indro's main corporate leadership experience was based in the Netherlands with Philips (now NXP) Semiconductors BV, where he held several global board positions, including Executive Vice President – Global Marketing & Sales, Chief Marketing Officer and CEO of the Automotive and Contactless ID/Smart Card Businesses. Most of his time was spent in Asia and the US.

His earlier career included being Commercial Director within the leadership team which took VideoLogic (now Imagination Technologies) through an IPO, as well as senior management positions within Hitachi's European semiconductor division.

Indro has a strong personal interest in the development of skills for industry and getting the best talent pipeline developed. He co-founded the [UK Electronics Skills Foundation](#), which has developed into an innovative and successful partnership between industry and academia encouraging bright, young students to develop careers in the UK electronic systems industry.

He also served on the SEMTA (now Enginuity) board for 9 years, where he was also chairman of the committee managing their investment fund.

Indro has a degree in Engineering Science from Oxford University, is a graduate of the Wharton Advanced Management Program and speaks several European languages.

About Innovate UK

Innovate UK is part of UK Research and Innovation, a non-departmental public body funded by a grant-in-aid from the UK government. It drives productivity and economic growth by supporting businesses to develop and realise the potential of new ideas, including those from the UK's world-class research base.

[38th Universal Periodic Review of human rights: UK statement on Estonia](#)

World news story

The UK delivered the statement on Estonia at the 38th Session of Universal Periodic Review (UPR), sharing recommendations to improve their human rights record.



The Universal Periodic Review takes place in Geneva.

The United Kingdom commends Estonia's commitment to protecting human rights domestically and internationally, and welcomes the decision to withdraw the planned referendum on the definition of marriage.

The UK strongly welcomes Estonia's commitment to media freedom, and we look forward to collaborating closely ahead of the third Global Conference on Media Freedom. We are also pleased to see the continued strengthening of the Chancellor of Justice's powers to act as and fulfil the functions of a National Human Rights Institution. This is a crucial step and brings Estonia in line with international human rights norms.

We recommend Estonia:

1. Plan to tackle potential resurgence of modern slavery routes transiting Estonia as external borders reopen and ensure a victim-focused response;
2. Ensure an open, merit-based process when selecting national candidates for UN Treaty Body elections;
3. Pass legislation to bring the Registered Partnership Act into force and ensure its full implementation.

Thank you.

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[**New cutting-edge testing centre to**](#)

fast-track COVID-19 variant vaccines

- Facility will speed up deployment of vaccines tailored to tackle variants
- Hancock: labs will help “future-proof country from threat of new variants”

Vaccines tailored to tackle COVID-19 variants are to be accelerated through new state-of-the-art labs, Health Secretary Matt Hancock has announced today (Wednesday 5 May).

The government will invest £29.3 million through the Vaccines Taskforce in Public Health England’s new testing facilities at Porton Down, to assess the effectiveness of existing and new vaccines against variants of concern.

The funding will increase the site’s current capacity from 700 to 3,000 blood samples tested a week in order to fast-track variant vaccines. These tests measure the levels of antibodies to COVID-19 that are generated by the vaccines.

The investment will enable Porton Down’s expert scientists to accelerate the pace and scale of specialised testing to support the rapid development of vaccines designed to combat specific mutations of COVID-19.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The UK has proven itself to be a world-class force in the production of COVID-19 vaccines, with the Oxford/AstraZeneca, Novavax and Valneva vaccines all researched, developed or manufactured on British soil.

We’ve backed UK science from the very start of this pandemic and this multi-million pound funding for a state-of-the-art vaccine testing facility at Porton Down will enable us to further future-proof the country from the threat of new variants.

We are committed to supporting the UK’s flourishing life-sciences industry and this announcement is yet another critical way we will build back better to protect the country over the coming months and years.

While there is promising evidence existing vaccines are effective against variants such as those first identified in Kent and South Africa, work continues to ensure we have a robust programme to test current and potential future variants of concern.

The expanded testing capacity at Porton Down will ensure the UK stays one step ahead of the virus and is in the best possible position to respond to new threats from COVID-19 as quickly as possible.

The government is working with existing and new suppliers to design vaccines targeted at variants of concern and the Porton Down facility will support this process.

Minister for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment Nadhim Zahawi said:

Our vaccination programme has so far saved thousands of lives, but it's vital we put in place robust support for the programme for the future.

This funding will allow us to increase the testing capacity at Porton Down with a new innovative facility and ensure our COVID-19 vaccines are effective against any future variants of concern.

The UK remains at the forefront of vaccine research and development, and today's announcement will further cement us as a global frontrunner in our future response to COVID-19.

All vaccines being used in the UK have met the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) strict standards of safety, effectiveness and quality.

Dr Jenny Harries, Chief Executive at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), said:

A new variant that can escape the current vaccines is the greatest risk of a third wave. This new investment will help us stay one step ahead of the virus by doubling our capacity to test vaccine effectiveness against emerging variants.

While we expect the existing vaccines to offer protection against new variants, particularly preventing serious illness and death, it is important that we continue to monitor the picture as it develops.

The best way to prevent the spread of variants is the same as always – follow public health advice and remember hands, face, space.

£19.7 million of investment into the new facilities was originally approved in September 2020 to deliver increased capacity for the clinical testing of vaccines. By January 2022, there will be an increased capacity for testing variant samples from 700 to 1,500 per week.

The government will now be providing an additional £29.3 million to increase capacity for testing variant samples from 1,500 per week to 3,000 once completed. In total, this equals £49 million of funding for the facilities.

As announced in the Spending Review, the government has made available more

than £6 billion to develop, manufacture and procure COVID-19 vaccines.

This funding will also be allocated to manufacturing, research and development and other areas needed to develop vaccines, including fully funding the University of Oxford's clinical trials, as well as funding trials for other vaccines such as Novavax, Janssen and Valneva.

Overall, the UK has secured access to 517 million doses of 8 of the most promising COVID-19 vaccines. These are:

- Pfizer/BioNTech for 100 million doses
- Oxford/AstraZeneca for 100 million doses
- Moderna for 17 million doses
- Janssen for 30 million doses
- Novavax for 60 million doses
- Valneva for 100 million doses
- GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur for 60 million doses
- CureVac for 50 million doses

The newly established UKHSA will bring together the country's cutting-edge health security science capabilities, data analytics and genomic surveillance with at-scale testing and contact-tracing capability – combining key elements of Public Health England with NHS Test and Trace including the Joint Biosecurity Centre.

The new agency will work to protect the country from future health threats and ensure the nation can respond to pandemics quickly and at greater scale.

[PM meeting with US Secretary of State Blinken – 4 May 2021](#)

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson met US Secretary of State Blinken.



Downing Street spokesperson said:

“The Prime Minister met US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Downing Street today.

“The Secretary of State is in London to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers’ meeting, and he and the Prime Minister discussed the UK’s ambition for our G7 Presidency and the close alignment between UK and US foreign policy. They agreed that UK-US cooperation will be instrumental in achieving progress on tackling Covid, protecting the environment and other international priorities. They also welcomed wider work the UK and US are doing together in areas such as trade and defence.

“The Prime Minister and Secretary Blinken agreed that the global roll out of vaccines will be key to defeating the coronavirus pandemic. They underlined the importance of G7 work in this area, including efforts to increase international manufacturing capability.

“They also discussed a number of foreign policy issues including Afghanistan, Iran and China.

“The Prime Minister looked forward to welcoming President Biden to the UK when he makes his first overseas visit to the G7 in June.”

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[PM call with European Round Table for Industry \(ERT\) – 4 May 2021](#)

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson had a call with the European Round Table for Industry.



Downing Street Spokesperson said:

“This afternoon the Prime Minister hosted a call with businesses from the European Round Table for Industry (ERT), alongside the Secretary of State for International Trade.

“The Prime Minister began by setting out the UK’s cautious journey out of lockdown and how this would allow businesses in the UK and across the continent to build back better and prosper.

“They discussed the UK’s commitment to championing a global green recovery ahead of the upcoming COP26 summit in Glasgow. The Prime Minister outlined the Government’s Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution to drive clean jobs, business investment and growth over the next decade.

“They spoke about the importance of creating the right infrastructure and business environment needed to support innovation. The Prime Minister and International Trade Secretary reiterated the Government’s commitment to uniting and levelling-up the whole of the UK with skills, infrastructure and technology, to attract investment and innovation into the UK from businesses around the world.

“On trade, the discussion focussed on how to foster a pro-trade, pro-business agenda between the UK and EU. The Prime Minister welcomed the recently ratified EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and said that the UK was an open and welcoming economy, which remains international in its outlook.

“The Prime Minister ended by thanking the delegation for their engagement. He reaffirmed his desire to see the UK and EU thrive together and noted that whilst the UK is now outside the EU, we remain a part of Europe.”

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