

## [COVID-19 health disparity review: letter to stakeholders](#)

Letter from Minister for Equalities Kemi Badenoch to participants in the stakeholder engagement group that helped to inform Public Health England's (PHE) work, Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups.

The letter is in response to their help informing the review and to ask for their participation in further engagement with the government to address the disparities identified by the PHE Review.

Related publication: [COVID-19: understanding the impact on BAME communities](#)

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## [UK Government invests £150,000 in Scottish research projects to boost jobs and create skills](#)

The UK Government is investing in three ambitious Scottish research projects to help drive local economic growth, provide skills training and create high-value jobs in Glasgow, Edinburgh and South-West Scotland.

A total of 17 projects across the UK will receive £50,000 each to power up the country's economic recovery through research and development.

Scottish projects receiving funding include:

- HotScot – a project led by the University of Strathclyde to extract low cost, low carbon heat from old flooded mines in Glasgow;
- Centre for Regulated Bio-Manufacture – led by Edinburgh's Heriot-Watt University, the project aims to establish an advanced therapies, biologics and manufacturing cluster in the Lothian region; and
- Digital Dairy Value-Chain – led by Scotland's Rural College this project will combine digital communications with advanced manufacturing to help create a more modern, efficient, resilient dairy industry in South West Scotland and Cumbria.

They are receiving initial funding through UK Research and Innovation's flagship Strength in Places Fund. The 17 proposals could help the UK to respond to some of the world's most pressing challenges – from climate change to the production of medicines.

If the early stages of development are successful, each project will be able to apply for a further investment of £10-50 million early next year.

It follows the announcement by the UK Government in June 2020 of the first wave of the Strength in Places Fund, which saw 7 projects across the UK benefit from £400 million of government and industry funding to develop their research projects. This included:

- £55 million for a consortium led by the University of Edinburgh to fund research to understand financial behaviours and address financial challenges such as fair access to credit, property ownership and saving; and
- £91 million for a consortium led by the University of Glasgow to translate new approaches in precision medicine into real-world settings, which will allow doctors to select treatments for patients based on a disease's genetics.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

We are backing our innovators and with the support they need to turn great ideas into first-class industries, products and technologies.

I am delighted we are helping to kick start plans for three pioneering research projects across Edinburgh, Glasgow and South West Scotland which will build on local strengths, helping to create jobs, while developing new skillsets and increased productivity across the country.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

As we recover from the impact of COVID-19, it is more important than ever to inspire the next generation of innovators.

This search for knowledge and technological progression will vastly improve lives and I am delighted a number of Scottish projects are benefiting from this very valuable UK Government investment with the prospect of many more millions of pounds to follow if their early stages of development are successful.

UKRI Strength in Places Fund lead, David Sweeney, said:

Strength in Places is a flagship fund for UKRI. We welcome the focus of the UK Government's R&D Roadmap in unlocking economic opportunities around local economies in more places around the UK. I am delighted with the range of bids funded across the UK in the second wave of Strength in Places that will foster the local ecosystems to support innovation and sustained growth and strengthen collaboration between industry and our world-class research base.

Strength in Places Fund panel chair, Dame Kate Barker, said:

The bids provide further evidence of excellent research that meets business needs across the whole of the UK. They demonstrate great potential for industrial collaboration by bringing together consortia of business, research organisations and local leadership organisations to contribute to increased growth and productivity in areas of local economic activity.

Today's funding forms part of the government's ambitious commitment to increase public spending in research and development (R&D) by £22 billion by 2024/25, putting the UK on track to reach 2.4% of GDP being spent on R&D across the UK economy by 2027.

It follows the publication of the government's [R&D Roadmap](#) last month, which set out plans to drive the country's economic recovery through research and development and level up UK regions.

## **Further information**

Applications for the second wave of the Strength in Places Fund closed in October 2019. The winning projects will be awarded between £10m and £50m and will be announced in early 2021, following an assessment round in December 2020.

The Strength in Places Fund is a UK Research and Innovation flagship competitive funding scheme that takes a place-based approach to research and innovation funding to support significant local economic growth. The fund supports collaborative bids from local consortia including both businesses and research organisations, with strong engagement from local leadership partners and alignment with local economic plans.

The Strength in Places Fund is delivered by UK Research and Innovation in partnership with:

[The Office for Students](#) – higher education regulator for England

[The Department for the Economy](#) – higher education funding body for Northern Ireland

[The Scottish Funding Council](#) – higher education funding body for Scotland

## [The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales](#)

More detail about the Scottish projects:

- Digital Dairy Value-Chain (South-West Scotland and Cumbria): Led by Scotland's Rural College, the consortium will combine digital communications with advanced manufacturing to help create a more modern, efficient, resilient dairy industry. It will provide dairy farmers in South West Scotland and Cumbria with access to innovative technologies and data, helping them improve their milk production and processing. The project will also seek to provide industry focused training for dairy farmers in remote rural regions, accelerating their digital business skills, and helping to increase the productivity of their farms and business models.
- Centre for Regulated Bio-Manufacture (Edinburgh): led by Heriot-Watt University, the consortium aims to establish an advanced therapies, biologics and manufacturing cluster in the Lothian region. Working with the NHS, and through the creation of a new building for real world learning and cutting-edge laboratory facilities, it will seek to provide highly skilled training for the local population to help identify essential new therapies and bio therapeutics such as antibodies for the UK.
- HotScot (Glasgow): led by the University of Strathclyde, the consortium oversees three new mine water geothermal projects, extracting heat from old flooded mines, which will help to provide low-cost, low-emissions heat for communities and businesses across Scotland's Central Belt.

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## [New award scheme shines spotlight on Cadet Force adult volunteers](#)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, those volunteers have stepped up to keep children engaged in a world that provides unique opportunities for fun, friendship, action and adventure, as well as new skills and qualifications – all from the complexities of their own homes.

Sponsored by the Ministry of Defence, the four Cadet Organisations: Sea Cadets, Army Cadets, RAF Air Cadets and Combined Cadet Forces, are some of the largest and oldest voluntary youth organisations in the country and provide military themed activities and training for young people aged 10 to 18.

The Cadet organisations bring unparalleled opportunities for young people from all walks of life to learn, grow and excel and are run by thousands of ordinary volunteers, doing extraordinary things.

Lowland Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (RFCA) is formally recognising the hard work of the CFAVs through a new initiative, the Cadet Adult Recognition Awards (CARAs). The award scheme gives Cadets the opportunity to officially thank the Adult Volunteers who have committed to developing young people.

The CARAs are Cadet-nominated honours which recognise and thank CFAVs within the Cadet services in the Lowlands of Scotland.

The inaugural awards ceremony took place on YouTube on 7 August. Eleven prizes were awarded following dozens of nominations for a number of outstanding volunteers, the overall winner was Flt Lieutenant Grahame Kirsopp.

Kate Johnson, LO RFCA Head of Communications said,

With the exception of a small body of Permanent Support Staff, a huge proportion of the people who deliver the Cadets are volunteers. Many have day jobs, so once they get back from work they put on their uniform and help and assist these young people in so many valuable ways. They really are just fantastic individuals so we think it's a brilliant time to say thank you.

Each award was sponsored by businesses local to the area in which the Army, Air or Sea Cadet units are located. This provided a great opportunity for local employers to recognise the value and qualifications that can be gained as part of the Cadet Experience.

Kate Johnson, further went onto say,

As an organisation Lowland RFCA champions, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, the relationship between Defence and employers. And through our day-to-day work we have really good links with the local business community. We mentioned the CARAs to some of them and they were excited to sponsor a CARA which makes the award that little more special. This connects the business world with the Cadet world and brings a nice harmony across the board.

## **Full list of award winners**

- Glasgow & Lanarkshire Winner: Lt Kenny Boag (award sponsored by Rangers FC)

- Glasgow & Lanarkshire Runner-Up: Lt Joyce Quin (award sponsored by Forest Precision Engineering)
- Lothians & Borders Winner: C/Sgt Mcdevvit (award sponsored by City Building)
- Lothians & Borders Runner-Up: CSM McCauley (award sponsored by Bruce Stevenson Insurance Brokers)
- West Lowland Winner: CSM Finnigan (award sponsored by Tunnocks)
- West Lowland Runner-Up: Sergeant Major Gary Wakelam (award sponsored by Sked Construction)
- East Air Cadets Winner: Fg Off Peter Brown (award sponsored by Loganair)
- West Air Cadets Winner: WO Sarah Taylor (award sponsored by Loganair)
- East Sea Cadets Winner: Lt Lewis Bisset RMR (award sponsored by CalMac)
- West Sea Cadets Winner: Lt James Hearl (award sponsored by CalMac)

## **Further information**

Lowland Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association promotes the Armed Forces Reserves and Cadet Organisations in the Lowlands of Scotland. We maintain the Reserve and Cadet estate and provide recruitment support to individual units and engage with local communities to increase their understanding of Reserves and Cadets and advocate the opportunities and benefits of volunteer service to individuals and employers.

Lowland RFCA facilitates engagement between the Armed Forces Reserves and employers who want to find out how they can support our Reserve Forces or who have Reservists amongst their workforce. We encourage employers to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant and champion employers with the strongest commitment to the Reserve Forces through the Employer Recognition Scheme. For more information visit the [Cadet organisations](#).

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# Alister Jack responds to August 2020 Labour Market figures

News story

Scottish Secretary responds to the latest ONS employment figures



Commenting on the latest Office of National Statistics Report released today [11 Aug 2020] Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

The impact of coronavirus is again clearly seen in today's figures and we can expect that to continue for some time. That's why the UK Government has guaranteed an additional £6.5 billion this year to spend on public services and support businesses in Scotland. We have also loaned more than £2.3 billion to 65,000 Scottish businesses and supported almost 900,000 jobs in Scotland through the pioneering furlough and self-employed schemes.

Understandably many people are concerned about the future which is why we've set out our Plan for Jobs, to protect, create and support employment across the UK as we build back our economy. The Eat Out to Help Out scheme is also supporting thousands of jobs in the hospitality sector and next month we are launching the £2 billion Kickstart scheme to create thousands of high quality jobs for young people.

## **Overview:**

Scotland's labour market shows very clear signs of weakening with falling employment, rising unemployment and higher inactivity. This development is now consistent for quarterly and annual changes.

Scotland's indicators are heading in the wrong direction, including the claimant count rate now at 7.9% (July). This is up from 4.0% pre-lockdown. Unemployment increased (+11,000) and at 4.5% is up 0.4 percentage points from the three months before (January to March). This is also up from the year

before (+22,000) and it is moving away from the recent record low of 3.2% at the beginning of the year 2019.

There has also been a steady fall in employment in Scotland over the last three months (-15,000).

The headline figures for the UK and Scotland do not show the full impact of the economic lockdown. Last month's furlough figures showed that nearly 736,000 employments in Scotland were paused and over 155,000 self-employed people in Scotland had received UK Government support.

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## [United Kingdom supports the implementation of protocols against COVID-19 in municipal markets](#)

The Guatemalan Exporters Association (AGEXPORT), with the support of the British Embassy in Guatemala, will implement the project "Business and Municipal Leadership for COVID-19 Emergency and Economic Reactivation". It aims to develop and implement a strategy to prevent the spread of the virus and mitigate the risk of infection of COVID-19 by ensuring people's health and allowing the continuity or reactivation of economic activities in the municipalities, but in a safe and responsible way.

The municipalities and businesses in each community will participate under a collaborative scheme. The Ministry of Economy (MINECO), through the Directorate for Consumer Protection (DIACO), will donate masks for the sellers in the markets. With funding of Q300,000 from the UK and Q245,000 from members of Agexport, the project will be implemented in at least 10 municipalities around the country and in partnership with the export chain companies operating in those areas.

During the next six months, several activities will take place, including:

1. Communicating relevant information about COVID-19, including ways to prevent it and government's regulations for the reopening of economic activities.
2. Disseminating the "Guidance of recommendations for Municipal Markets and Public Squares and prevention of COVID-19".
3. Training staff from the municipalities on how to apply the Guidance. These will include people responsible for management, cleaning, garbage collection and security in the markets and public squares.
4. Donation of personal protection equipment and marking materials for the



market infrastructure (sanitation gel, thermometers, social distance marking, etc.).

The President of AGEXPORT, Connie de Paiz, expressed:

In the current context of social distancing, it is vital to support productive and commercial activities, since thousands of small producers and traders economically depend on these, in order to continue with their operations but complying with the health and safety protocols.

The British Ambassador in Guatemala, Nick Whittingham, said:

At a local level, it is important to have clear procedures to communicate the methods for prevention and handling of infected cases, complying with the government measures. The reopening of the economy is fundamental to guarantee people's livelihoods.

This project joins the activities that AGEXPORT has been developing in partnership with the National Mayors Association (ANAM) and the Ministry of Economy, with the support of the Presidential Commission for Municipal Affairs (COPRESAM).

The British Government contributes to lead the global efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, from mitigation projects to proposals to access a potential vaccine against the virus. Recently, Guatemala joined these discussions. More information [here](#).