

## [Press release: Foreign Secretary comments on reports of chemical weapons attack in Syria](#)

On reports of a chemical weapons attack near Idlib in Syria, the Foreign Secretary said:

I am horrified by the reports of an attack near Idlib in Syria. The reports we are receiving strongly suggest the use of chemical weapons. And although we cannot yet be certain about what has happened, this bears all the hallmarks of an attack by the regime which has repeatedly used chemical weapons.

The UK condemns the use of chemical weapons wherever and by whomever they are used and we will continue to lead international efforts to hold perpetrators to account. We continue to support the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and will work closely with them as they seek to investigate this latest incident.

If this is shown to be the work of the regime, it is further evidence of the atrocities perpetrated against the Syrian people over six years of appalling conflict.

Commenting on the UK co-hosted Syria conference in Brussels tomorrow the Foreign Secretary said:

It is vital that the international community continues to support the Syrian people. I am determined that the conference which the UK is co-hosting in Brussels steps up international assistance to the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict. The UK is playing a leading role, with the Prime Minister's announcement of a £1 billion package the latest element of our vital support.

**Further information**

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[News story: Thousands of BPS 2017](#)

# applications received

More than 10,000 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) applications have been submitted since the application window opened on 1 March, the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) announced today (4 April).

The RPA is encouraging farmers to apply online now, to ensure that their application is submitted before the deadline.

Applying online means that farmers and agents can quickly check and update existing personal and business details, as well as view and transfer land and entitlements.

Last year the RPA received a record 80% of applications online and almost 7,000 farmers and agents have started an online application for BPS 2017.

RPA Interim Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

More and more farmers and agents are using the Rural Payments service to apply online. Some 1,500 entitlements have been transferred online so far.

Throughout the application process, help and support is available through our online guidance, 'How to' videos and by telephone.

## **Online and paper applications**

Anyone who applied online for the Basic Payment Scheme in 2016 has been emailed all they need to apply online for BPS in 2017. Those who did not apply online in 2016 and did not use an agent have been sent a paper form and guidance on how to apply online.

## **Support available from the RPA**

Farmers and anyone helping them with their claim can find step-by-step guides on transferring land, transferring entitlements and a general overview of how to apply online in useful ['How to' videos](#). Further guidance and scheme rules can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

On-screen help is also available, going through the application process screen by screen. A copy of this on-screen guide is also [available for download or print](#).

The application deadline for BPS 2017 is midnight on 15 May 2017. Late applications will be accepted until 9 June but will incur a penalty. More information on how to claim or amend applications in the penalty claim period can be found in the Key Dates section of the [2017 guidance](#).

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# [News story: A connected and autonomous vehicle ecosystem: apply for funding](#)

The [Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles \(CCAV\)](#) is investing up to £55 million to make the UK's connected and autonomous vehicle testing ecosystem the world's most effective.

Here in the UK we have a strong automotive and technology heartland in the West Midlands through to Europe's only megacity, London. Projects should look to build on these strengths, integrating existing proving grounds and public road test sites to improve capabilities and create new ones, and develop a national cluster of excellence.

This competition is part of the test bed programme for the government's [Industrial Strategy](#).

## **Project streams**

UK businesses and research organisations can make applications in 3 streams.

### **Stream 1**

In stream 1 we are looking for projects that develop a public test environment in an urban, highly-dense city location. Up to £35 million is available to support up to 2 projects.

### **Stream 2**

For this stream we are looking to fund one controlled test facility that is representative of an urban or city environment. Examples might be a semi-controlled environment, such as a university campus or science and industry park, or a simulator that incorporates physical elements into a virtual environment. Up to £7 million is available.

### **Stream 3**

For this stream we are looking to fund one realistic, controlled high-speed, limit-handling environment. We expect this environment to allow the creation of a diverse range of test scenarios. This may include vehicle to everything (V2X) interactions, collision avoidance and limit handling. Simulators may also be included. Up to £13 million is available.

In all cases preference will be given to projects that can deliver operational facilities and be open for business within 12 to 18 months.

A map of the defined area for test facility sites. See the brief for a full explanation.

## The background

CCAV is a joint policy unit by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and the Department for Transport. Its aim is to ensure that the UK is a world leader in developing and testing connected and autonomous vehicles.

Funding is being provided by CCAV. It is being supported by Innovate UK.

## Competition information

- this competition opens on 3 April 2017
- there will be a briefing event on 4 April 2017
- the registration deadline is midday on 12 July 2017
- the application deadline is midday on 19 July 2017
- you must be a UK-based business, work collaboratively and carry out your project in the UK
- test facilities should meet specified criteria, as outlined in the competition brief

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## [Press release: Twelve new Enterprise Zones go live](#)

Announced in the Autumn Statement 2015, these new zones support businesses, helping budding entrepreneurs to start and established companies to grow. They offer business rates discounts and additional tax breaks, backed by a simplified local planning process.

In addition, 2 Enterprise Zones – the west of England LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) and the New Anglia LEP – have expanded to benefit more places and communities.

These new Enterprise Zones bring the total to 48 in England. They will build on the success of current zones, which have attracted more than £2.6 billion of private investment and more than 700 new businesses. It means more than 29,000 jobs have been created across a range of key industries since their launch in 2012.

Local Growth Minister Andrew Percy said:

Our modern Industrial Strategy is about creating the right environment for businesses to grow – Enterprise Zones are making sure this happens across the country.

This is a key part of our [Plan for Britain](#), creating a stronger

economy that works for everyone. These 12 new Enterprise Zones will help even more businesses to set up and grow. I'm confident they will build on the success we've already seen over the past 5 years.

## **Support for growing business**

Enterprise Zones are central to the government's Industrial Strategy. They will help businesses up and down the country seize the opportunities presented by leaving the European Union.

Each Enterprise Zone is unique, building on the strengths of each area. They support some of the country's most vital industries including manufacturing, technology and renewable energy.

The zones going live include:

- M62 Corridor Leeds City Region: in a boost to the Northern Powerhouse, the Zone will capitalise on the area's strong manufacturing industry and focus on digital technology, automotive engineering, textiles and glass making
- North Kent Innovation Zone: with 3 sites covering Ebbsfleet Garden City, Kent Medical Campus and Rochester Airport Technology Park, the Zone will focus on the life sciences sector
- Brierley Hill: a new tech office hub for the Black Country will support development of Britain's advanced manufacturing heartland in the Midlands Engine; it will have easy access to surrounding industrial sites as well as central Birmingham, national and international connections
- Cornwall Marine Hub: located over 3 sites at Hayle, Tolvaddon and Falmouth Docks, the Zone will establish Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as a global centre for the marine renewable energy sector

## **Further information**

The Enterprise Zones launching were announced at Autumn Statement 2015 and are:

### **Northern Powerhouse**

- M62 Corridor (Leeds City Region LEP)
- North East Round 2 (North East LEP)
- York Central (York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP)

## Midlands Engine

- Brierley Hill (Black Country LEP)
- Loughborough and Leicester (Leicester and Leicestershire LEP)

## South West

- Cornwall MarineHub (Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP)
- Dorset (Dorset LEP)
- Heart of the South West (Heart of the South West LEP)
- An extension to the West of England LEP Enterprise Zone

## South East and East

- Enterprise M3 (Enterprise M3 LEP)
- Enviro-Tech (Hertfordshire LEP)
- Newhaven (Coast to Capital LEP)
- North Kent Innovation Zone (South East LEP)
- An extension to the New Anglia LEP Enterprise Zone

Businesses basing themselves on Enterprise Zones can access a number of benefits:

- business rate discount worth up to £275,000 per business over a 5-year period
- generous enhanced capital allowances (tax relief) worth millions to businesses making large investments in plant and machinery
- 100% retention of business rate growth for the Local Enterprise Partnership, to enable them to fund development on the Enterprise Zone

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## [News story: FinTech Week 2017 line-up confirmed](#)

Britain will host some of the biggest names in UK and international FinTech when the second UK Fintech Week takes place in London next week.

Building on the success of last year, the week-long event will bring together industry, government and regulators to discuss the issues affecting Britain's world leading FinTech sector, including investment, access to skills and business support to FinTech start-ups.

The centrepiece event of Fintech Week 2017 is the first [International FinTech Conference](#) organised by HM Treasury and the Department for International Trade on 12 April.

Hosted by the Chancellor and featuring the Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney and the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Simon Kirby as well

as other leading figures from FinTech, Venture Capital and Financial Services organisations including Taavet Hinrikus (TransferWise), Samir Desai (Funding Circle), Eileen Burbidge (HM Treasury Fintech Envoy), Xavier Rolet (LSE plc), Douglas Flint (HSBC), Alastair Lukies (Prime Minister's Business Ambassador – FinTech) and Andy Stewart (Motive Partners).

The conference, sponsored by EY, HSBC, Pinsent Masons and Motive Partners will include exhibition space for 100 of the UK's top FinTech firms. 10 of these firms have been selected to pitch their business to attending investors from the main stage. The event will be an opportunity to meet over 200 domestic and international investors who will learn more about the UK's world-leading FinTech sector.

Looking ahead to the event, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond said:

Britain is already the best place in the world to start and grow a FinTech company. These events are a great opportunity to show why. The first ever International FinTech conference will bring together dynamic UK firms with an exciting vision of the future, and global investors who can support their future growth.

We have a plan for Britain and a modern Industrial Strategy and I see FinTech as an essential sector as we forge new trading relationships within, and beyond, Europe.

Secretary of State for the Department for International Trade, Liam Fox, said:

FinTech makes a huge contribution to our economy, and our knowledge, skills and expertise strengthens the UK's position as a global leader. We have created the right environment for businesses to start and grow in this thriving sector, and with my department's support and events like this international FinTech conference, we will help even more UK-based FinTech companies to capitalise on the international opportunities and attract inward investment to our shores.

Economic Secretary, Simon Kirby said:

Growing our FinTech sector will deliver a radical change for consumers. It will revolutionise how we all bank and improve financial inclusion at home and abroad.

FinTech Week 2017 is an exciting opportunity for UK firms and investors and an important part of our plan to forge a truly Global Britain that remains a great place to do business.

Imran Gulamhuseinwala, EY's Global FinTech leader, said:

This conference really underlines UK FinTech's place as a global market leader. Our industry's potential for redefining the financial services landscape is huge and we're already seeing significant new digital solutions coming to market – and this pace of innovation is likely to quicken over the next few years. Investors will continue to recognise both the huge potential the UK represents as a hub and as an attractive destination to do business. It's vital that the UK continues to support FinTech in order to maintain our lead, which is the envy of many other countries.

Douglas Flint, Group Chairman, HSBC Holdings plc, said:

Digital technology is rapidly changing the world. At HSBC we're working alongside FinTech companies to harness the opportunities arising from new technology to offer a wider range of products while making banking simpler and more secure for our customers.

FinTechs complement HSBC's internal expertise, and at the same time we can help them to refine their products and expand to new international markets, propelling their growth.

HSBC is delighted to support the Government's FinTech conference. The UK is one of the leading locations for FinTechs, attractive to the international entrepreneurial talent that propels the industry and is enhanced by a supportive regulatory regime, in particular the FCA's sandbox.

Luke Scanlon, Head of Fintech Propositions, Pinsent Masons:

Fintech is driving a rapid transformation in financial services, changing the way in which we think and talk about money, payments and finance. The UK has for some time now flourished as a hub for the sector, and one of the reasons why it has flourished is the level of open access that FinTech businesses have in engaging with investors, regulators, legal experts and others at forums such as the International Fintech Conference. There are however, many detailed legal and regulatory questions which remain around how existing and future products and services of FinTech businesses can be delivered and bring benefits to customers. These questions need to be answered at a pace at which these emerging businesses are innovating. Our expertise in Fintech means we are well placed to support these firms with these legal and regulatory challenges that face them.



Alastair Lukies CBE, Founding Partner, Motive Partners and Prime Minister's Business Ambassador – FinTech said:

The United Kingdom has established itself as a leading destination for financial technology innovation and has long been a global financial services hub. This event, at this time, marks the UK's intent to continue building on this progress and welcomes entrepreneurs and institutions from all over the world to work with the UK in building a more sustainable, socially responsible and efficient financial services ecosystem for everyone.

## **Monday 10th April – Tuesday 11th April**

Innovate Finance Global Summit

The first day of Innovate Finance's conference for the financial technology industry will feature a series of keynotes and panel discussions on issues like Brexit, globalization, new technology, regulation and cybercrime. Speakers will include Rajesh Agrawal, Deputy Mayor of London for Business, David Sproul, Chief Executive of Deloitte UK, and Chris Woolard, Director of Strategy Competition at the FCA.

The second day's focus will be on 'Pitch360', in which start-ups will be given the opportunity to pitch their idea in front of the global FinTech community.

## **Wednesday 12th April**

International Fintech Conference

HM Government will host the International FinTech Conference in London on 12 April 2017. The Conference will bring together domestic and international investors and UK FinTech firms for an exciting one-day programme that aims to attract more investment into the UK's world-leading FinTech sector.

Speakers include:

- Philip Hammond, Chancellor of the Exchequer
- Mark Carney, Governor, Bank of England
- Simon Kirby MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury
- Eileen Burbidge, HM Treasury's Special Envoy for FinTech
- Alastair Lukies, Founding Partner, Motive Partners and Prime Minister's Business Ambassador – FinTech
- Taavet Hinrikus, CEO, TransferWise
- Samir Desai, CEO, Funding Circle
- Imran Gulamhuseinwala, Global Head of FinTech, EY
- Douglas Flint, Chairman, HSBC
- Andy Stewart, Managing Partner, Motive Partners
- Elizabeth Corley, Vice Chair, AllianzGI
- Antony Jenkins, CEO, 10x

- Constantin Cotzias, Director, Bloomberg Europe
- Keith Morgan, CEO, British Business Bank
- Xavier Rolet, CEO, London Stock Exchange Group
- Ron Kalifa, CEO, Worldpay
- William Russell, Chair of FinTech Network Action Group, City of London
- Chris Woolard, Executive Director for Strategy and Competition, FCA
- Adrienne Harris, Former Special Assistant to the (US) President for Economic Policy
- Richard Wazacz, CEO, Octopus Labs
- Tim Bunting, Partner, Balderton Capital
- Samantha Ghiotti, Partner, Anthemis
- Jan Hammer, Partner, Index Ventures
- Dr Chris Sier, HM Treasury's Northern Powerhouse Envoy for FinTech
- Miles Celic, CEO, TheCityUK
- Darren Westlake, CEO, Crowdcube
- Edward Twiddy, CIO, Atom Bank
- James Varga, CEO, the ID Company
- Oli Barrett, Director, Start Up Britain

## **Wednesday 12th April – Thursday 13th April**

### Pensions Dashboard TechSprint

Simon Kirby, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury will publically launch the Pensions Dashboard Prototype and challenge teams of developers from over 20 technology firms to build potential applications in a 24 hour TechSprint. The ABI event will also be attended by policy and consumer experts to discuss how dashboards can best help consumers understand and make decisions about their pensions.