

New body to make UK world-leading centre for telecoms innovation

- Will guide firms seeking R&D funding or collaboration on Open RAN and other disruptive tech
- Comes as new stats show two-thirds of UK premises can access lightning-fast gigabit broadband

The UK will be a world leader in telecoms research and development under plans for a new government-funded organisation dedicated to boosting innovation in the country's telecoms supply chain.

The UK Telecoms Innovation Network (UKTIN) will act as an information point for telecoms companies looking to access funding or testing facilities for R&D and opportunities to collaborate on developing new and improved technologies for UK mobile and broadband networks.

The government has today [launched](#) a competition for organisations to apply for up to £10 million to establish and run the centre, which will support innovators at the right time to scale up, develop their products, gain better access to telecoms markets and drive exports abroad.

It comes as new independent figures from [ThinkBroadband](#) show that two-thirds of UK homes and businesses (66.75%) can now access lightning-fast gigabit broadband. This is a huge rise on 2019 when coverage was just 6 per cent and shows rapid progress is being made in the government's plan to speed up the rollout of better broadband and level up communities with faster internet speeds.

The UKTIN will be run by a consortium of organisations with telecoms expertise and will support knowledge sharing and collaboration on open and interoperable network technologies such as Open RAN, which allows telecoms companies to mix and match telecoms equipment rather than having to rely on a single supplier when building or maintaining networks.

The technology is considered crucial to the government's £250 million [strategy](#) to lower barriers for firms seeking to enter the UK telecoms supply chain – which will increase competition, drive up the quality of products and services and reduce the UK's current reliance on a small number of international suppliers.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Julia Lopez said:

The UK Telecoms Innovation Network will be the first port of call for any telecoms company looking to access R&D funding and a matchmaker for firms looking to join forces on cutting-edge projects.

Ultimately this is about making the UK the best place in the world

to develop rapid and seamless new technology for the digital networks that will power our economy well into the 21st century.

The UKTIN will be tasked with creating an up-to-date database of information on R&D funding in the public and private sector. It will also create an annual report which maps out the latest developments and opportunities in disruptive and innovative telecoms technology in the UK, including Open RAN.

Setting up the UKTIN was one of the key recommendations in last year's report from the Telecoms Diversification Taskforce: an independent body set up by the government to advise on necessary steps to transform the UK's telecoms supply chain so it is more competitive, innovative and secure.

The UKTIN is expected to be up and running by the end of the year, with the winning consortium announced in the summer.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- Up to £10m is available for the competition. We are asking applicants to submit two bids one for £5m and another for £10m. We will then determine the bid which represents the most value for money.
- Funding for the UKTIN is subject to Programme Business Case approval.
- The deadline for applications is noon on 20 May 2022.
- We will be holding a briefing event for companies who are interested in applying to the competition on the 7 April 2022. Please register your interest online [here](#) to attend.

[Government's preferred candidate for the role of UK Statistics Authority Chair](#)

Press release

Lord True has today confirmed Sir Robert Chote as the preferred candidate for the role of UK Statistics Authority Chair



Lord True has today confirmed Sir Robert Chote as the government's preferred candidate for the role of UK Statistics Authority Chair.

Sir Robert is a former head of the Office for Budget Responsibility and the Institute for Fiscal Studies and is currently serving part-time as the first chair of the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council, an independent body created in 2021 to bring greater transparency and independent scrutiny to NI's public finances. He also chairs the external advisory group of the Parliamentary Budget Office in the Republic of Ireland.

Sir Robert studied economics at Queens' College, Cambridge (where he is now an Honorary Fellow), journalism at City University in London and public policy at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University in Washington DC. He has an honorary doctorate from the University of York and is a Visiting Professor at Kings College London. He was knighted in 2021 for services to fiscal policy and the economy.

The recommendation follows a fair and open recruitment process following the requirements of the Governance Code for Public Appointments. Pre-appointment scrutiny by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) will follow shortly.

Minister of State at the Cabinet Office Lord True said:

I am delighted to confirm Sir Robert Chote as the preferred candidate for the office of Chair of the UK Statistics Authority. Sir Robert has all the attributes, experience and independence of judgement needed to lead the UKSA Board and the regulation of UK statistics.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sir David Norgrove for his work as UK Statistics Authority Chair over the last five years".

Following a pre-appointment hearing, PACAC will publish their recommendations, which the government will consider before deciding whether to finalise the appointment in consultation with HM the Queen.

Notes to Editors:

- Sir Robert Chote has been Chair of the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council since 2021. Previously he was Chair of the Office for Budget Responsibility (2010-20), Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (2002-10), an adviser to senior management at the International Monetary Fund (2000-02), Economics Editor of the Financial Times (1995-1999) and a economics and business writer on The Independent (1990-94).
- The Panel for the campaign was made up of: Alex Chisholm, Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary Jayne-Anne Gadhia, Lead non executive, HMRC Sian Jones, Deputy Chair, UK Statistics Authority Clare Lombardelli, HM Treasury Chief Economic Adviser Graeme Archer, Vice President and Head, Research & MST Statistics, GSK R&D

Published 22 March 2022

Government funds vital works to restore Hammersmith Bridge to former glory

- government confirms it will step in to provide up to one-third of costs to stabilise the bridge
- takes total funding injected into the structure by government to nearly £7 million
- ministers remain committed to supporting local council to fully reopen the bridge to all traffic

Ministers have announced a multimillion-pound funding package for vital restoration works to Hammersmith Bridge, as government confirms it will fund one third of the costs to stabilise the structure.

The announcement today (22 March 2022) is a landmark moment in the bridge's history. Almost £3 million will be injected into the project by ministers, so it remains permanently open to pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic. This comes ahead of further strengthening works to open it up to motorists and takes total government funding for the bridge's restoration to nearly £7 million.

The government has been pivotal in ensuring the bridge was reopened to cyclists, pedestrians and river traffic in July 2021, after it was shut in 2019 following the discovery of cracks in its pedestals.

Previous government funding of £4 million went towards immediate mitigation

works to the structure, which involved blast cleaning and inspections to its pedestals, helping ensure there were no long-term risks to its reopening.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Today, I'm giving Londoners reassurance this government will do everything in its power to keep this vital, historic structure open.

We're investing millions into its restoration, ensuring local residents can continue to cross the river by foot or bike and I look forward to working further with the local council on future works to reopen the bridge to motorists.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

This is an incredibly important day in the long history of Hammersmith Bridge.

Following an enormous amount of work by engineers, government, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and TfL, I can confirm we will be injecting millions of pounds into its restoration, so it stays open to pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic.

We will not lose momentum. Work is already underway to ensure the structure is reopened to motorists as soon as possible and returned to its former glory.

After over a year of delay with sorting out the bridge, the government injected fresh impetus by setting up a special [Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce](#) in September 2020, bringing together all parties to discuss both long-term and temporary solutions – this has now delivered on its promise.

The release of today's funding, which amounts to £2.93 million, comes after ministers approved the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham's business case.

Engineering firm Mott MacDonald will carry out the stabilisation works, which will involve the use of elastomeric bearings, allowing any pressure to be applied equally to all 4 corners while protecting the vulnerable cast-iron structure.

Pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic will still be able to use the bridge throughout the duration of these works, with stabilisation expected to take less than a year to complete.

UK donates 3.7 million medical items to Ukraine

- UK at forefront of humanitarian response with 3.7 million medical donations to Ukraine
- Over 1.5 million doses of medicines, including pain relief, on flight to region from the UK yesterday morning (Monday 21 March)
- UK pledges to continue providing support to Ukrainian friends

More than 3.7 million items of medical supplies have been given to Ukraine by the UK to help the country cope with the emergency caused by the Russian invasion and to help save tens of thousands of lives.

Items including vital medicines, wound packs, and intensive care equipment donated by NHS England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have been flown to the region over the past three weeks, leaving from Stansted and Heathrow Airports, and RAF Brize Norton.

The latest flight – the 11th so far – left from Heathrow yesterday morning (Monday 21 March) carrying over 100,000 packs of medicine, including strong painkillers to treat severe pain for those who have been injured by Russian attacks.

Yesterday's shipment is delivering around 120,000 packs – more than 1.5 million doses – of vital medicines urgently requested by Ukraine. These will help to treat severe pain from serious injuries, as well as to assist with intensive care procedures.

The UK Government has been working closely with Ukrainian officials to deliver targeted support to ensure medical items are reaching the people who need them most.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

It is appalling to watch the atrocities being committed by Putin as he pursues his unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

The UK has acted swiftly to provide life-saving humanitarian aid to Ukraine and will continue to do everything we can. Yesterday's shipment contains vital medicines including strong painkillers to treat severe pain and sedatives for intensive care procedures.

I am incredibly grateful for the donations made by NHS England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as we provide further support to our Ukrainian friends.

The milestone of 3.7 million medical items donated to Ukraine forms part of the government's wider humanitarian response to this emergency. The UK

government flew 21 children with cancer to the UK, who are now receiving lifesaving treatment from the NHS.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has displaced millions and caused untold suffering.

The UK is playing a leading role in providing humanitarian aid, from medicines, to shelter and expertise on the ground. We are working with the government of Ukraine to ensure we help those who need it most.

Some of the significant items sent to the Ukraine so far includes:

- Nearly 3,000 adult resuscitators
- Around 160,000 wound care packs
- Over 300,000 sterile needles
- Over 32,000 packs of bandages
- 1,600 pieces of equipment for ventilators
- Over 54,000 cannulas
- 220,000 packs of medicines – around 2.3 million doses – including antibiotics and painkillers
- 72,000 packs of gloves
- 28,000 FFP3 masks

On Thursday 17 March the government announced that Ukrainians fleeing their home country will be guaranteed free access to NHS healthcare, including hospital services, GP and nurse consultations, urgent care centres and injury units.

More than 10,200 visas have been granted through the Ukraine Family Scheme and, for those with valid Ukrainian passports, the government has removed the need to attend an in-person appointment to conduct biometric checks before travelling to the UK.

Since Monday 14 March, people in the UK have been able to register their interest to sponsor a named Ukrainian under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, with more than 150,000 people registering.

The government has provided £400 million in humanitarian and economic aid to Ukraine and neighbouring countries since the Russian invasion started, along with defensive anti-tank and anti-aircraft weaponry.

Background

- The 3.7 million figure is made up of each individual item and individual dose of medicine.

PM call with the leaders of the US, France, Germany and Italy (the Quint): 21 March 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the leaders of the Quint – the United Kingdom, United States, France, Germany and Italy – this afternoon.



The Prime Minister spoke to the leaders of the Quint – the United Kingdom, United States, France, Germany and Italy – this afternoon to discuss our coordinated response to the escalating crisis in Ukraine.

The Prime Minister underlined his horror at President Putin's use of increasingly brutal tactics in Ukraine, such as siege warfare and the targeting of civilians. He welcomed the unity of allies standing steadfastly against Russia's reprehensible behaviour, noting how effective collective action has been in undermining Putin's war machine.

The leaders affirmed their ongoing commitment to support Ukraine militarily, diplomatically and economically, equipping the democratically-elected government in Kyiv with the tools it needs to defend itself. They also resolved to increase the pressure on Russia to halt its unprovoked invasion, including by maintaining wide-ranging and coordinated sanctions.

The Prime Minister looked forward to further discussions at the NATO and G7 summits this week, including on how to increase military support to Ukraine to qualitatively improve their defensive capability.

Published 21 March 2022