

Procurement reforms launched to improve service for DSA customers

At SLC, our customer vision includes providing an outstanding customer experience, helping customers to invest in their futures by providing an intuitive, supportive and trusted service.

We are making progress and one area in particular where we recognise improvements can be made is the journey for customers in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). DSA provides support with study related costs and provides vital support to thousands of students with a disability across the UK. It's hugely valuable in enabling opportunity and widening participation in higher education.

Our customers have told us that accessing this support has challenges, including too much onus on them to take action, it's a lengthy process and that no organisation takes ownership of their journey.

This is why we have been working on significant reforms that will transform and improve the DSA service. It will remove key pain points in the customer journey, provide the customer with a single point of contact and support throughout the process, and introduce contractual control to ensure consistent quality of service. In addition, these changes will reduce the time taken to access DSA.

[More information on the supplier model is available in our recently published procurement prospectus.](#)

Enhancing the customer experience is a crucial element of the reforms and at a recent supplier day, we outlined that new suppliers will work with SLC, the UK Government's Department for Education and Welsh Government to enhance and strengthen the quality standards to create a service that better meets the needs of our customers. The quality metrics will include agreed service levels, quality standards and processes for resolving exception complaints.

We also confirmed that we are engaging with our customers and non-commercial stakeholders, such as third sector bodies, in these discussions to ensure the quality framework best suits our customers. A DSA Student Finance Customer Panel has been established to hear first-hand experiences of customers in receipt of DSA and help to shape the reforms, building on the insight gathered from customer surveys and a number of in-depth one to one interviews with students with a disability.

Working together will ensure the best outcome for our customers and we look forward to collaborating to improve the journey for customers in receipt of DSA.

AUKUS: Tri-lateral statement to the IAEA Board of Governors

UK Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Corinne Kitsell said:

Chair,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

In September 2021, our leaders announced the beginning of an 18-month consultation period to determine the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines.

Integral to these consultations are our shared objectives of setting the highest possible non-proliferation standards, strengthening the integrity of the non-proliferation regime, and maintaining Australia's impeccable non-proliferation credentials.

Chair,

Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States remain fully committed to our respective non-proliferation obligations. Our cooperation under AUKUS will reflect our longstanding leadership in global non-proliferation.

Consistent with this, Australia has voluntarily committed to not domestically enrich or reprocess nuclear material in support of the nuclear-powered submarine program.

Chair,

Our goal is to enable verification of the non-diversion of nuclear material in our nuclear propulsion-related cooperation under AUKUS by proceeding under the framework of Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol with the IAEA.

We also seek to identify opportunities to advance the use of safeguards tools in ways beneficial to the Agency and the international non-proliferation regime.

At the beginning of this meeting, the Director General reported on our engagement with the IAEA to date. Our engagement with the IAEA is a critical element of our consultations. We have commenced technical consultations with the IAEA on verification-related issues. These discussions build on the direct engagement we have sought and maintained with the Agency since the announcement of our joint effort.

AUKUS partners, including at leader and ministerial level, have and will continue to engage directly with the Director General, Board Members and other interested member states.

Chair, On 8 February, the AUKUS partners brought into force an agreement for the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information (ENNPIA). This agreement is narrowly focused on providing for the exchange of naval nuclear propulsion information among the three parties during the 18-month consultation period. It does not allow for the transfer of nuclear material or equipment, but provides a basis for more detailed consultation between partners and will support our ongoing engagement with the IAEA.

Chair,

We continue to oppose calls for a standing agenda item, a 'special committee' or an 'inter-governmental process' on AUKUS.

As noted earlier, AUKUS cooperation is proceeding under the framework of Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol. Not only is it proper and appropriate, but there is a firm legal basis for the Director General and the Secretariat, to engage Australia, with the support of relevant partners, on these issues. The international non-proliferation regime relies on such engagement taking place.

We remain deeply concerned by continuing calls for the Director General to avoid engaging with us on these issues, and by suggestions that IAEA safeguards arrangements in relation to prospective naval nuclear propulsion in Australia lie outside Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and are not within the mandate of the Agency. These claims are absurd. In fact, some colleagues that have aligned with suggestions that the transfer of nuclear material to Australia goes beyond the mandate of the IAEA are the very same that have suggested we haven't engaged with the IAEA sufficiently. Such incorrect and contradictory statements undermine the role and authority of the Agency, and are purely politically motivated, and have no place in this Board.

Chair,

Transparency and open engagement have been central to our approach from the outset, especially in regard to issues of nuclear material, facilities, and activities relevant to the IAEA. We remain committed to keeping member states and partners informed, and we look forward to the opportunity to inform the Board of significant developments related to naval-nuclear propulsion under AUKUS under Any Other Business at future meetings of this Board.

Thank you, Chair.

[Bikeability receives record £20 million government investment to improve access to cycle training](#)

- record £20 million Department for Transport funding commitment ensures more children and families can cycle confidently and safely
- government continues to support vital cycling skills through Bikeability and encourage instructors to join the sector
- funding builds on commitment to decarbonise our transport network and build back greener from COVID-19

Cycle training for children and families has received a record investment as the Department for Transport (DfT) has confirmed £20 million of funding for Bikeability to deliver its cycle training programme next year.

Bikeability has trained over 3.6 million children since 2007 and DfT has now announced record funding to ensure even more are equipped with the skills, confidence and knowledge to cycle on our roads and have the opportunity to gain other essential life skills.

This funding has the potential to deliver half a million training places for children and their families, supporting even more people to introduce active travel into their everyday lives.

The [Bikeability Trust](#) is continuing to offer bursaries for those wanting to join the industry, boosting the number of Bikeability instructors, which is important to ensure every child who wants it can be trained.

This comes as the industry gathered last week for the Bikeability annual conference today, at which Minister Trudy Harrison delivered the keynote speech.

Speaking ahead of the conference, Active Travel Minister Trudy Harrison said:

Cycling helps both our planet and our wellbeing, and learning to cycle is also an important life skill.

Our ambition is for every child to be able to access Bikeability training and I'm delighted we've been able to invest a record £20 million to help make this a reality.

Emily Cherry, CEO at the Bikeability Trust, said:

We have already trained more than 3.6 million children how to cycle confidently and safely. This record investment will help us to achieve our ambition of offering every child cycle training.

Bikeability teaches children an essential life skill that benefits their health and helps them make more sustainable travel choices. Getting children cycling when they're young embeds active habits for life, gives them the independence to travel to school and, most importantly, helps them discover how fun cycling is.

The government wants more parents and pupils to choose cycling for the school run and other everyday journeys, as we look to decarbonise our transport network and build back greener from COVID-19.

The ambition is for half of all journeys in towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2030 and DfT is allocating an unprecedented £2 billion over 5 years to deliver that ambition.

This all comes as DfT recently launched Active Travel England, the Executive Agency tasked with driving up the quality of cycling and walking routes, led by former Olympic cyclist Chris Boardman.

[WTO TRIPS Council March 2022: UK statement](#)

Chair, before we proceed with the agenda of this TRIPS Council, this delegation needs to speak to a matter of much gravity.

In the World Trade Organization, as an international institute upholding international rules, it's important that we recognise what is currently happening in Ukraine. This delegation expresses full solidarity with Ukraine and its population.

Russia's assault on Ukraine is an unprovoked, premeditated attack against a sovereign democratic state. The UK and our international partners stand united in condemning the Russian government's reprehensible actions, which are an egregious violation of international law and the UN Charter.

As a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, Russia has a particular responsibility to uphold international peace and security. Instead, it is violating the borders of another country and its actions are causing widespread suffering.

The Russian Government has shown that it was never serious about engaging in diplomacy – it has deliberately worked to mislead the world, in order to mask its carefully planned aggression.

As the UN Secretary-General has said, such unilateral measures conflict directly with the United Nations Charter – the use of force by one country

against another is the repudiation of the principles that every country has committed to uphold.

Russia must urgently de-escalate and withdraw its troops. It must be held accountable and stop undermining democracy, global stability, and international law.

Thank you Chair.

Thank you Chair,

As you know, the United Kingdom considers the WTO notification system an essential component in promoting transparency between WTO members.

We have notified members of three recent legislative changes enacted to keep the UK's IP system up to date, to meet international obligations and to reflect the UK's exit from the European Union.

In previous sessions, this delegation has outlined the overall effort as well as spoke to selected individual notifications. We are ready to respond to any questions members may have on notifications submitted to this Council.

We would once again like to thank the Secretariat for the efficiency and ease of the eTRIPS system. We continue to encourage all members to avail themselves of this system.

Thank you Chair.

Thank you Chair,

The UK takes its commitment to supporting developing countries seriously, including by fulfilling our obligation contained in Article 66.2 of the TRIPS Agreement to incentivise transfer of technology to Least Developed countries. The UK particularly recognises the importance of technology transfer for economic and industrial development of LDCs.

In particular, it is the UK's ambition to strengthen research capacity in developing countries and in LDCs in particular at an individual, institutional, and systemic level. Our programmes aim to ensure greater development impact through the strong involvement of skilled national and regional researchers. An increase in the relevance and applicability of research at a national level will only come if partnerships harness essential local knowledge.

The UK would like to extend our gratitude to delegations who attended and contributed to discussions in the workshops held on 2 and 4 March looking at the implementation of Article 66.2. The sessions were highly useful for sharing experiences on transferring technology to Least Developed Countries. We would also like to thank the WTO for again facilitating such productive engagement between Members. We look forward to contributing to additional sessions in the future to support Least Developed Countries make the most of TRIPS provisions designed to enable technology and knowledge transfer.

Thank you Chair.

Thank you, Chair.

As my delegation expressed its well-known position on this issue on numerous occasions, most recently in detail at the last session of this Council, I will not repeat it. Our participation in this debate has been to ensure the WTO's intellectual property response is both effective and reflects evidence-based decision making, by noting the role IP rights have played in the development and production of Covid-19 goods which are positively contributing to the global pandemic response. This has and will not change. We also acknowledge recent announcements contributing to improved vaccine equity demonstrating why waiving IP rights is not needed.

The rescheduling of MC12 makes clear the importance of working towards a meaningful and comprehensive pandemic response package. Members all recognise and agree the importance of making progress towards achieving this shared objective. The United Kingdom has repeatedly stated its intention to work towards a pragmatic, evidence-based solution and we stand ready to continue our constructive engagement. However, the current process around waiver discussions is not transparent and means this Council is not informed of the substance of discussions. At this point, I would like to support the delegation of Tanzania, speaking on behalf of African group, in the call for a fuller briefing to this Council. This is needed to fulfil the mandate placed upon Members to engage with each other constructively. Simply put, we cannot be expected to progress towards an outcome on discussions which this Council does not know the details of.

While we recognise the urgency of taking forward discussion on the wider pandemic response, the United Kingdom will not accept an outcome when we have not been consulted or given sufficient prior notice to assess what is being proposed in writing. This is because getting it wrong could make both short and long-term pandemic preparedness worse. Members of this Council are entitled to digest, scrutinise, and discuss any outcome of these negotiations before we can reach consensus. As was made clear ahead of November's expected MC12, this process needs to happen before Ministers can agree an outcome.

Thank you, Chair.

Thank you Chair,

The UK is pleased to co-sponsor this agenda item and would like to thank co-sponsors and in particular to Canada for bringing forward this paper on a topic important to so many entrepreneurs around the globe. In particular, the UK would like to respond to the paper's question asking, "What specific financing needs or considerations pertain to innovative and/or IP-based MSMEs?"

There were 5.3 million micro-businesses (those with fewer than 10 employees) in the UK in 2021. Micro-businesses account for 95% of all UK businesses. Even though most businesses in the UK employ fewer than 10 people, micro-businesses account for only 21% of employment and 14% of turnover.

Bank lending is often the most viable route to finance for more established businesses. Smaller early-stage businesses may, however, be overlooked by investors, and IP-intensive businesses with substantial intangible assets can often find it difficult to access debt finance.

The UK Intellectual Property Office (IPO) and British Business Bank (BBB) conducted several roundtables, the results of which were published in 2018. These roundtables concluded that the main obstacles to using IP as collateral for loans were banking regulations, legal enforceability, valuation, and liquidity. I will now briefly set out these four issues:

- **Banking regulations** Banks are required to hold a minimum ratio of capital in relation to the risk-weighted assets (loans) that they hold. This is called the capital adequacy ratio, the standards for the calculation of the capital adequacy ratio are based on the international rules set out in Basel III. These standards define the eligibility criteria for inclusion as capital. Intangible assets are specifically excluded from eligibility as capital for capital adequacy. This results in IP-intensive firms finding it more challenging to obtain bank loans than firms with tangible assets such as buildings.
- **Legal enforceability** IP and other intangible assets are often difficult to separate from the firm that developed them. This might make it difficult for lenders to exercise claims on those assets or take possession of the IP in the event of a default. The lender would not then be able to sell the IP to recover its losses.
- **Valuation** IP and other intangible assets may be difficult to value, particularly if they are innovative and therefore unique. There is no single agreed methodology for valuing IP. Without a consensus approach, it is difficult to verify independently the value attributed to a piece of IP.
- **Liquidity** Transactions involving intangible assets are infrequent and not publicly recorded. The limited frequency of intangible asset transactions may in part be due to a lack of mature supporting infrastructure such as valuers, agents and value logs.

The UK government is working towards future-proofing the UK finance market so that intangible assets such as IP are considered fully as part of lending decisions. Several UK actions are outlined in the response to the next question below.

Chair, the UK would also like to respond to the question “What are some best practices or options in terms of IP-backed financing for MSMEs and/or otherwise for the financing innovative or IP-based MSMEs?” The UK government published its Innovation Strategy in July 2021 that included several key actions related to finance and a commitment to “ensure innovators can access the right private finance at the right stage and provide targeted public support where there are gaps in private markets”.

The UK Government is committed to making private markets function as effectively as possible. The UK benefits from a diverse finance ecosystem for

innovative start-ups, including angel investors, equity crowdfunding platforms, and venture capital funds. Where private capital alone is insufficient to enable innovative companies to start, grow and scale up the UK government co-invests alongside private investors.

The British Business Bank is an important delivery partner in UK Government efforts to make finance markets work more effectively for smaller businesses. Up to the end of 2020, the Bank had supported the provision of £42 billion worth of finance to 170,000 small and medium-sized businesses across the UK, excluding COVID-19 debt and equity finance schemes.

The steps on the innovation finance journey typically involve progressing from the founder's own resources through grant funding, seed finance and later venture/institutional capital and ultimately, once a business has demonstrated it is able to generate sufficient cashflows, debt finance.

The UK has an array of public interventions which, alongside private capital markets are designed to enhance the funding ecosystem, UK government has continued to strengthen its support offer for innovative businesses. with Innovate UK and the British Business Bank playing a key role. This means that the UK is a good place for businesses of all sizes to access the funding they need for innovation.

Thank you Chair.

[OSCE meeting on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine: UK statement, 10 March 2022](#)

Thank you Mr Chairman.

Your Excellencies, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the United Kingdom today. And in doing so talk about Russia's flagrant disregard for their commitments to the OSCE and its principles.

The unprovoked, premeditated and illegal invasion of Ukraine is, simply put, a disgrace.

In particular, I would like to focus on the people affected by President Putin's war. His war of choice.

Mr Chairman, we have been following, all of us, with growing horror, the news from Mariupol. The airstrike by Russia on a maternity hospital was abhorrent. It was reckless. It was appalling. It underscores the terrible toll this war is exacting on Ukrainian families. While Russia's representatives spout

fiction about threats from Ukraine, it is UNICEF that has reported that at least 37 children have been killed 50 injured.

This follows evidence of Russian forces targeting evacuation corridors earlier this week, with whole families cut down as they attempted to run for safety.

Russia's use of indiscriminate force against innocent civilians, against children, is clear for all to see. It is right that it must, it must be investigated and those responsible must be held to account.

And that is why the [UK joined 37 other countries in referring these atrocities to the International Criminal Court](#).

It is also why [we joined 44 other countries in launching the Moscow Mechanism](#) to investigate Russia's human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law in Ukraine.

And as we've just heard from Martin Griffiths, as he's outlined today, the conflict is having a terrible humanitarian impact.

Many towns and cities in Ukraine have faced over a week of persistent shelling. Thousands upon thousands of people are without water, heat or electricity. There are critical shortages of food, shortages of medicine. The World Health Organisation has reported 18 attacks on healthcare providers. This must stop.

Two million people have fled Ukraine so far. Hundreds of thousands more are displaced within the country.

Russia's actions have a massive human cost, and I am grateful to Liliana Palihovici, for rightly drawing attention to this.

Sadly, we can expect a disproportionately severe impact on women, girls and the most vulnerable and excluded.

We must protect them from sexual violence and other forms of exploitation, as a central requirement of international humanitarian law.

The United Kingdom is committed to supporting Ukrainian women and girls, recognising the critical contribution women are making on the frontline and in communities affected directly by Russia's aggression.

The determination shown by Ukrainians in the face of such adversity is, simply put, incredible. From the inspirational leadership of President Zelenskyy and his ministerial team, to the courage of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and others defending their homeland in any way they can, and of course to the unity, the unity of Ukrainian society rallying to support those in need.

Their bravery, in the face of Russia's relentless onslaught, is quite humbling. They fight to defend the values, the very values we all share.

Mr Chairman, we also commend the bravery of those Russian people demonstrating against President Putin's appalling war. And to those people in Russia I would say, we know that this is not done in your name.

We are deeply concerned at the arrest of thousands of peaceful protesters and the crackdown on the independent media as Mr Putin tries to hide the reality of his actions from his people.

We know too that many people in Belarus do not support Mr Lukashenko's complicity in this illegal war.

We condemn Belarus' facilitation of the Russian invasion by hosting Russian military forces and assets and providing access through its territory.

And today, on this day, I would like to draw the Russian Ambassador's attention to the opening words of the [UN Charter](#):

"We the peoples of the United Nations, determine to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small... and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for...treaties and... international law can be maintained".

I understand that not so long ago these were the very words he expressed Russia's commitment to that Charter in this very hall.

May I suggest he might draw the attention of his government to it once again.

Its principles have inspired millions around the world. Even now in Minsk and Moscow, people gather to demonstrate their support for Ukraine and their opposition to this war.

141 countries from all over the globe voted in favour of a UN resolution condemning the Russian government's actions.

The demands are simple – Mr Putin, stop the attacks on civilians. Stop this war of choice. Stop this war now. Pull out your troops from Ukraine and respect international law.

And, Mr Chairman, he would be wise to listen. President Putin has badly misjudged the strength, the unity, the resilience of the Ukrainian people.

By continuing his so-called "special operation" all President Putin achieves is more bloodshed and more suffering – not only amongst Ukrainians, but also amongst the Russian people.

For our part, the United Kingdom will continue providing humanitarian aid and defensive military equipment. We are ratcheting up our sanctions to tighten the economic vice and cut funding to Mr Putin's war machine.

We will continue to call out Russia's actions in every multilateral forum. We, the United Kingdom, will stand by Ukraine, in the determined support of

their sovereignty, will stand with Ukraine for their unity, will stand with Ukraine for their independence and territorial integrity, today, tomorrow, and for as long as it takes.

Thank you Mr Chair and I ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.