

Government backs innovative businesses with new £150 million loan scheme

- Government launches new series of loans worth £150 million to support innovative SMEs and level up the UK
- launch of the loans programme will broaden the financial support available to businesses, ensuring they can access funding at all stages of innovation
- builds on the successful pilot programme that provided £163 million to around 200 businesses in all parts of the UK, supporting hundreds of jobs

Some of the UK's most innovative businesses are set to benefit from a new series of loan competitions offering up to £150 million to support their research and development projects, the government announced today.

The loans will support innovations deemed to have the strongest potential to support future economic growth and tackle social challenges, across fields such as net zero, health and wellbeing, and next-generation digital technologies, as well as the '7 Technology Families' of the [Innovation Strategy](#) – advanced materials and manufacturing; engineering biology; electronics; sensors; photonics and quantum; and robotics and smart machines.

The funding, to be delivered through Innovate UK, will be available to SMEs over the next 3 years and will prioritise projects focused on the most important areas of the future economy as set out in the Innovate UK [Plan for Action](#). Businesses can apply for funding through the [Innovation Funding Service](#).

The loans are part of the government's plan to build on the measures outlined last year in its Innovation Strategy, enabling UK innovators to access the right finance at the right time in order to grow, building on our world-leading research capability and helping to secure the UK's position as a science superpower.

Projects supported via the successful loan programme to date have included portable freezers able to safely deliver vaccines to care homes and surgeries, a platform designed to protect hospitals and healthcare centres from cyber-attacks during the pandemic, and patented hospital screens preventing the transmission of pathogens and viruses.

Science Minister George Freeman said:

As the success of our extraordinary vaccine development and roll-out made clear, the UK is home to some of the most brilliant and innovative minds in the world.

Supporting our talented innovators, not only to develop their ideas

but to see these ideas through to commercialisation, will be essential to growing an economy built on the technologies of the future, and securing the UK's status as a true Innovation Nation.

So, I am thrilled that after an extremely successful pilot programme, Innovate UK are launching this substantial new series of loans to support SMEs working across the country on the most innovative projects for the future economy, entrenching our position as a science superpower.

Businesses with innovative late-stage projects can apply for a loan between £100,000 and £2 million, with flexible repayment terms to help secure their future growth and commercial success. The new full-scale programme will start with monthly competition rounds, for which applicants will need to demonstrate evidence of a high quality proposed innovation project, suitability to take on a loan, and inability to access finance for their project from commercial finance providers.

This government-backed finance builds on the success of an extended pilot programme that has been delivered by Innovate UK Loans Limited since 2017, and the programme of innovation continuity loans delivered as part of Innovate UK's coronavirus support package.

Innovation loans are designed to support suitable micro, small and medium sized-businesses (SMEs) in carrying out late-stage research and development projects, with a clear route to commercial success to drive productivity and growth across the UK.

Indro Mukerjee, CEO of Innovate UK, said:

Innovation loans are an important part of the investment support that Innovate UK offers to help UK businesses achieve their growth ambitions. We have tested this new form of support rigorously and I am pleased that we can now offer £150 million over the next 3 years through innovation loans as part of our commitment to support innovative businesses to grow rapidly and achieve scale.

The innovation loans scheme is just one of the services to growing and scaling businesses across the UK. Our wrap-around support now includes greater access to Innovate UK EDGE, a business advisory service; and Innovate UK KTN, more opportunity for businesses to connect with potential academic and business partners to help scale in the UK and abroad.

Allied with this is our continued work with the British Business Bank and private finance to provide further backing for UK innovators.

The decision to transition from pilot to full-scale loans programme was taken following an [independent evaluation of the scheme's success](#), which found that

the pilot had been extremely effective, and that the innovation loans programme is viewed as a key finance product within the market, supplying essential funding that would not have been available elsewhere.

The innovation loans programmes to date have committed £163 million to around 200 businesses in all parts of the UK, enabling new product development and commercialisation activities, supporting investment in research jobs and delivering growing levels of sales. Over a third of businesses in the portfolio have accessed additional private investment, leveraging new capital of over £110 million, with an average raise of £1.8 million.

Report 02/2022: Derailment of a passenger train at Carmont

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PDF, 14.5 MB, 298 pages

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At around 09:37 hrs on Wednesday 12 August 2020, a passenger train derailed near Carmont, Aberdeenshire. The train, reporting number 1T08, was the 06:38 hrs service from Aberdeen to Glasgow, which was returning towards Aberdeen due to a blockage that had been reported on the line ahead. It was travelling at 73 mph (117 km/h), just under the normal speed for the line concerned. After derailling, the train deviated to the left, before striking a bridge parapet which caused the vehicles to scatter. Tragically, three people died as a result of the accident and the remaining six people on the train were injured.

On the morning of the accident there was near-continuous heavy rain at the site of the accident between about 06:00 hrs and 09:00 hrs. The 51.5 mm of rain which fell in this period at the accident site was close to the average rainfall for the month of August in this part of Scotland. Train 1T08 derailed because it struck debris that had been washed out of a drainage trench. This trench, which had been constructed between 2011 and 2012, contained a perforated pipe that had been installed as part of a project to address a known problem with drainage and the stability of a cutting in that area. However, the drainage system and associated earthworks had not been

constructed in accordance with the original design and so were not able to safely accommodate the water flows that morning.

RAIB's investigators found that a low earth bank (bund) had been constructed that ran across a slope leading towards the track. The presence of this bund significantly altered the flow of water such that extreme rainfall would cause a concentrated flow into the steeply sloping section of trench. The evidence indicates that the intensity and duration of this rainfall would have generated water flows into the trench that were sufficient to wash away the gravel fill and the ground immediately surrounding the trench.

No instruction was given by route control or the signaller that train 1T08 should be run at a lower speed on its journey between Carmont and Stonehaven. At that time there was no written process that required any such precaution in these circumstances. Consequently, normal railway rules were applied to the train movement. The RAIB's investigation found that the 'route controllers' (who were responsible for the operational management of Scotland's railway network) had not been given the information, procedures or training that they needed to effectively manage complex situations of the type encountered on the morning of 12 August 2020.

Recommendations

As a consequence of this accident, RAIB has made 20 recommendations for the improvement of railway safety. The areas covered include:

- better management of civil engineering construction activities by Network Rail and its contractors
- additional standards and guidance on the safe design of drainage systems
- improved operational response to extreme rainfall events, exploiting the full capability of modern technology, and based on a detailed understanding of the risk associated with extreme rainfall
- enhancing the capability of route control offices to effectively manage complex events
- extending Network Rail's assurance regime to encompass route control offices
- addressing the obstacles to effective implementation of lessons learnt from the investigation of accidents and incidents
- measures to prevent derailed trains from deviating too far from the track (equipment fitted to track and/or trains)
- addressing train design issues identified by the investigation and better understanding the additional risk associated with the operation of older trains.

Video summary, including a digital visualisation of the accident

[Derailment of a passenger train at Carmont](#)

Visualisation of the performance of the drainage system at Carmont on 12 August 2020

[Washout visualisation](#)

Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents, said:

“This was a tragedy that devastated the lives of the three families who lost their loved ones and brought terror and injury to six other people on the morning of 12 August 2020. Our thoughts are with them all. Nothing can undo this event, but we owe it to everybody who was affected by it to strive to learn safety lessons for the future.

“Although railway safety in the UK has been steadily improving over recent decades, the tragedy at Carmont is a reminder of just how disruptive and potentially dangerous Britain’s volatile weather can be. The railway industry needs to get even smarter about the way it counters this threat, and to better exploit remarkable modern technology that enables the prediction and tracking of extreme weather events such as summer convective storms. There’s also an urgent need for the railway to provide real-time decision-makers with the information, procedures and training they need to manage complex and widespread weather-related events across the rail network.

“No one wants to shut down the railway every time it rains. Railways need to operate safely and reliably in most weather conditions. If they’re not able to achieve this, potential passengers will be forced onto the roads, which are undoubtedly much more dangerous in bad weather conditions. So, there’s a balance to be struck and technology can help to get this balance right. Modern weather forecasting and monitoring systems can spot the truly exceptional events before they occur and as they happen, so allowing railway operators to implement precautionary measures when it’s prudent to do so. This would benefit the safety of the line (by restricting train speeds, or suspending operations, when necessary) while reducing the need for imposing blanket speed restrictions over areas that are not at significant risk.

“This investigation highlights the risk of uncontrolled changes to railway infrastructure during construction. It is so sad that a project that was designed for the protection of the travelling public became unsuitable for its intended use and posed a hazard to trains because of such uncontrolled changes to the design. When anything is built in difficult conditions, such as on the side of a steeply sloped cutting, changes will often be needed for practical reasons. Although such changes are normal and can be highly beneficial in terms of saved time and cost, they need to be made with care. In each case, the original designer needs to understand the change that’s proposed and review the implications of a change that may appear inconsequential to the team on site. I hope this example will resonate throughout the UK’s construction industry.

“It’s important for all of us in the rail industry not to dismiss this truly harrowing accident as a one-off event. The railway industry needs to think through the implications of severe weather on its infrastructure, whilst also looking to the behaviour of trains should they derail after striking obstructions such as washouts and landslips. Is there more that could be done to keep trains in line and closer to the track, to minimise the risk of jack-knifing and to keep bogies attached to rail vehicles? RAIB doesn’t have all of the answers but is urging the railway industry to think about ways of guiding derailed trains, and to think about the longer-term implications of

continuing to operate rolling stock that pre-dates modern standards.”

Note to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

Newsdate: 10 March 2022

PM call with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine: 9 March 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy this evening.



The Prime Minister spoke with Ukrainian President Zelenskyy this evening.

He began by praising President Zelenskyy’s deeply moving address to the House of Commons yesterday.

President Zelenskyy thanked the Prime Minister for the UK’s ongoing military support, alongside tough new sanctions to punish the Putin regime for its actions.

The Prime Minister committed to further tighten these sanctions in order to

impose the maximum economic cost on Russia. He outlined the work the UK is doing to provide the military equipment Ukraine needed to defend itself.

Both leaders condemned the horrifying attack on a maternity hospital in Mariupol and the failure by Russian forces to respect ceasefire agreements in humanitarian corridors. The Prime Minister noted that this was yet further evidence that Putin was acting with careless disregard for International Humanitarian Law.

The PM ended by reaffirming the UK's unwavering support for the people of Ukraine and said that President Zelenskyy had earned the admiration and love of the British people.

Published 9 March 2022

[Faith minister joins London church leaders to show support for Ukrainians](#)

Faith Minister Kemi Badenoch and London church leaders today (9 March 2022) met at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in London to demonstrate solidarity and support for the Ukrainian people and the role the Christian church can play in welcoming newly arrived Ukrainians in the UK.

The minister met leaders, including Rector of the Ukrainian Cathedral and Archbishop of Westminster, and said the government and faith leaders stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with the Ukrainian community, which has a 'deep and long-standing connection' with the UK.

Faith Minister, Kemi Badenoch MP, said:

The UK and Ukraine have a deep, long-standing connection, with the first Ukrainians arriving in Manchester over a century ago. Today, in 2022, tens of thousands of people born in Ukraine now call the UK home – and I hope they will continue to call it home long into the future.

Since the conflict began, people in this country have been in awe of the determination and courage Ukrainians have shown.

It has sparked a wave of support across the UK with people up and down the country making donations to help the humanitarian effort and attending vigils to show solidarity.

As ever, the church and other faith communities have been at the heart of these humanitarian efforts, and I stand together with

faith leaders in calling for peace and offering our full support.

Those who attended the meeting included:

- Rector of the Ukrainian Cathedral, Archpriest Mykola Matwijiwskyj
- Cardinal Vincent Nichols – RC – Archbishop of Westminster
- Archbishop Nikitas (Archbishop of Thyateira and Britain)
- Archdeacon Luke Miller, Archdeacon of London
- The Very Reverend Archimandrite Nephon Tsimalis (Archimandrite of Thyateira and Britain)
- Archbishop Fidelia Onyuku-Opukiri (Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches)
- Archbishop Angaelos (Coptic Orthodox Archdiocese of London)

The Bishop of London, The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, said:

Church leaders of all denominations across London have been horrified by the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine as it continues to unfold. Today, we stand together in praying for peace.

As millions of Ukrainians are being forced from their homes, families torn apart by a senseless conflict, we, as Christians and as a community, must do all we can to support those fleeing from war and those who remain in Ukraine.

Very Rev Fr Mykola Matwijiwskyj, Cathedral Rector, Vicar General of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London, said

Church leaders have gathered at the Ukrainian Cathedral in central London to stand with Ukraine and its God-loving people as they suffer the atrocities of war and crimes against humanity.

Today, leaders of all denominations across London unite to pray for peace and to work together to ensure the safety and welfare of those fleeing, so that those displaced may find solace and peace of soul in their traditional churches.

DLUHC is launching a new [sponsorship scheme](#) to make sure Ukrainians forced to flee their homes due to this terrible conflict have a route to safety.

The scheme will match charities, businesses and individuals to those who do not have family ties to the UK, allowing them to come here for an initial 12 months, with the ability to work and access public services.

This is alongside the extended family route and changes to visas for people already in the UK which we have been brought in following extensive engagement with Ukrainian partners on what support is needed now, which will allow tens of thousands of people to be reunited with their families and stay

here safely.

[Defence Secretary statement to the House of Commons on Ukraine: 9 March 2022](#)

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the situation in Ukraine and Her Majesty's Government's support to the Government in Kyiv.

The situation on the ground is grave. As we can recall, on 24 February, forces of the Russian army, unprovoked, crossed into Ukraine's sovereign territory. Along three main axes, Russian armour has attempted to occupy Ukraine. Its plan was to reach and encircle Kyiv, encircle Ukrainian forces near the border and invade from the south to link up with its forces via Mariupol.

Russian high command committed 65% of its entire land forces, which are indisputably in possession of overwhelming firepower and armour. It is estimated that at the start of the invasion they had between 110 and 120 battalion tactical groups dedicated to the task, compared with approximately 65 in Ukraine. Their missile stocks gave them even greater strength to reach Ukraine at distance. However, what they did not and still do not possess is the moral component so often needed for victory.

After 14 days of the war, according to the Ukrainian general staff, at 6 March, Russian casualties were assessed to include 285 tanks, 985 armoured fighting vehicles, 109 artillery systems, 50 multiple launch rocket systems, 44 aircraft, 48 helicopters and 11,000 soldiers, who have lost their lives needlessly. There are numerous reports of surrenders and desertions by the ever-growingly disillusioned Russian army. To be clear, those are Ukrainian figures; I have to caution the House that we have not verified them by defence intelligence or other means.

I can announce to the House our assessment that, of the initial Russian objectives, only one has been successfully achieved. While Russian forces are in control of Kherson, Melitopol and Berdyansk in southern Ukraine, they currently encircle the cities of Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Mariupol but are not in control of them. In addition, their first day objective of targeting Ukrainian air defence has failed, preventing total air dominance. The Ukrainian armed forces have put up a strong defence while mobilising the whole population. President Putin's arrogant assumption that he would be welcomed as a liberator has deservedly crumbled as fast as his troops' morale.

For our part, the United Kingdom continues to play a leading role in supporting Ukraine. On 17 January, I announced to the House the Government's intention to supply military aid to the Ukrainian armed forces. The aid took the form of body armour, helmets, boots, ear defenders, ration packs, rangefinders and communication equipment, and for the first time it also included weapons systems. The initial supply was to be 2,000 new light anti-tank weapons (NLAWs), small arms and ammunition.

In response to further acts of aggression by Russia, we have now increased that supply. I can update the House that, as of today, we have delivered 3,615 NLAWs and continue to deliver more. We will shortly be starting the delivery of a small consignment of anti-tank Javelin missiles as well. I want to assure the House that everything we do is bound by the decision to supply defensive systems and is calibrated not to escalate to a strategic level.

Britain was the first European country to supply lethal aid. I was pleased that not long after a military aid donor conference I held on 25 February, many more countries decided to do the same. From right across Europe, the donations came. In particular, I want to highlight the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Poland, Romania, the Baltic states, Belgium and Slovenia for their leadership, and we should not ignore the significance of the German Government joining us, in a change of stance, and donating such aid.

Donations are not enough; the delivery of aid to the front line is just as important. Here, again, Britain is leading, because alongside Canada, the United States and Sweden, we have invested in building Ukrainian military capacity since 2015, and we find ourselves able to co-ordinate the delivery alongside our partners.

As the conflict intensifies, the Russians are changing their tactics, so the Ukrainians need to, too. We can all see the horrific devastation inflicted on civilian areas by Russian artillery and airstrikes, which have been indiscriminate and murderous. It is therefore vital that Ukraine maintains its ability to fly and to suppress Russian air attack.

To date, the international community has donated more than 900 man-portable air defence missiles and thousands of anti-tank guided weapons of varying types, as well as various small arms. However, the capability needs strengthening, so in response to Ukrainian requests the Government have taken the decision to explore the donation of Starstreak high-velocity, man-portable anti-air missiles. We believe that this system will remain within the definition of defensive weapons, but will allow the Ukrainian forces to better defend their skies. We shall also be increasing supplies of rations, medical equipment, and other non-lethal military aid.

As with any war, the civilian population is suffering horrendous hardships. According to the Ukrainian Minister of Education, 211 schools have been damaged or destroyed, and media footage shows Russian strikes hitting kindergartens. The Chernihiv regional administration reported that the Russian air force was employing FAB-500 unguided bombs against targets in the city, and according to Human Rights Watch, civilians in Mariupol have now been without water and power for almost a week. President Zelenskyy talked of

children dying of thirst. Today the estimated number of Ukrainian civilians killed or injured stands at more than 1,000, but the true figure is expected to be much higher, and I am afraid that worse is likely to come. It is for that reason that the UK will increase its funding for Ukraine to £220 million, which includes £120 million of humanitarian aid. That will make the United Kingdom the single biggest bilateral humanitarian donor to Ukraine. We are also supporting humanitarian work with the Polish and Romanian Governments on the borders.

As I said in my last statement, we still believe that it is worth trying to build diplomatic pressure on Russia. This week, my good friend the Prime Minister met the Prime Ministers of Canada, the Netherlands and Poland. He also spoke to the leaders of France, Germany and the United States, and the Prime Ministers of Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The Foreign Secretary is in Washington at the G7, and also attended the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting earlier this month. I myself met the Ukrainian Ambassador just this morning. President Putin should be and can be in no doubt that the international community is united against his actions. It remains strong, and will not back down.

As well as giving direct military support to Ukraine, we continue to bolster our contribution towards NATO's collective security. NATO Defence Ministers will gather next week in Brussels to discuss the next steps. The UK is doing its bit in giving military support and reassurance to its allies. We are currently supplying significant air power to NATO, including increased air patrols, with both Typhoons and F-35s for NATO air policing. We have also deployed four additional Typhoons to Cyprus to patrol NATO's eastern border, and have sent an additional 800 troops to Estonia. Over the last week, Apache and Chinook helicopters were involved in exercises in Estonia. Meanwhile, HMS Diamond has sailed to the eastern Mediterranean, HMS Northumberland is taking part in a northern deployment, and HMS Grimsby is in the Norwegian sea supporting NATO mine countermeasures.

On Monday HMS Prince of Wales, RFA Tidesurge and HMS Defender joined HMS Albion and RFA Mounts Bay for Exercise Cold Response, a multinational exercise off the coast of Norway, and HMS Richmond will be exercising with the Joint Expeditionary Force. We have put over 1,000 more British troops on readiness to support humanitarian responses in the bordering countries. Britain's contribution to NATO is significant and enduring. It is important at this time that, in order to maximise our reassurance and resilience effect, we co-ordinate through NATO and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

Few of us will not have been moved by President Zelenskyy's speech yesterday. His people are fighting for their very survival. His country is united against this aggression, and it is indeed his country's darkest hour. Yesterday I saw footage of a Russian armoured train, bristling with guns, heading towards Mariupol. A single brave Ukrainian woman ran to the train and shouted "Slava Ukraini"—unmoved, unintimidated by the guns. That woman's bravery should inspire us all.

I know that many of our constituents, and our colleagues, are fearful of what will happen next. President Putin and the Kremlin continue to threaten

countries that offer help to Ukraine. Their military campaign will, I am afraid, become more brutal and more indiscriminate, but it is my firm belief that our strength to stand up to such bullying comes from our alliances. As long as we stand united, both as a House and as the international community, the Kremlin's threats cannot hurt us. We should take strength from the peoples right across Europe who are standing shoulder to shoulder to protect our values—our freedom, our tolerance, our democracy and our free press. That is our shield.