

Government boost for new renewable energy storage technologies

- £6.7 million government funding awarded to projects across the UK to support the development of new energy storage technologies
- energy storage will be crucial as the UK transitions towards cheap, clean, domestically-produced renewable energy
- maximising the potential of renewables will help lower costs in the shift to a greener energy system

Nearly £7 million awarded to turbocharge UK projects that are developing innovative energy storage technologies, in first round of government-backed competition.

The intermittent nature of renewables like solar and wind power means that energy can be produced when it is not needed, such as during extended periods of high wind. However, as new technologies are developed, this energy can be stored for longer, helping manage electricity generation variations and increasing resilience, while also maximising value for money.

Twenty-four projects based across the UK have been awarded the first round of funding through the Longer Duration Energy Storage competition, which is worth £68 million in total. These projects will benefit from a share of over £6.7 million to develop new energy storage technologies that can utilise stored energy as heat, electricity or as a low-carbon energy carrier like hydrogen. Ranging from the development of thermal batteries to converting energy to hydrogen, they have been selected because of their potential to improve technology performance and reduce the cost of meeting net zero. Successful projects could benefit from a greater tranche of funding from a second phase of the competition, which will support these projects towards commercialisation, encouraging private investment and creating new jobs.

Energy and Climate Change Minister Greg Hands said:

Driving forward energy storage technologies will be vital in our transition towards cheap, clean and secure renewable energy.

It will allow us to extract the full benefit from our home-grown renewable energy sources, drive down costs and end our reliance on volatile and expensive fossil fuels. Through this competition we are making sure the country's most innovative scientists and thinkers have our backing to make this ambition a reality.

As part of the UK government's commitment to reach net zero, we are accelerating the transition to clean, renewable energy, and shifting to a green electricity grid by stepping up the use of clean energy sources like wind and solar power.

This will not only help reduce the nation's dependence on expensive fossil fuels, but will also provide cheaper energy to consumers, and will mean more of the UK's energy is produced domestically. The green energy transition will therefore involve ensuring the UK's electricity infrastructure can cope with greater shares of renewables, while meeting power demands securely.

Today's funding is awarded under Phase 1 of the [Longer Duration Energy Storage Demonstration competition](#) (LODES), part of the government's £1 billion [Net Zero Innovation Portfolio](#). Phase 1 will be followed by Phase 2, which will see the remainder of the £68 million funding awarded to several of the most promising Phase 1 projects, to proceed to build and demonstrate their technology fully. Selecting projects for the next stage will take place upon the completion of Phase 1, whereby projects will be assessed based on their potential to commercialise their technologies.

The energy storage projects receiving funding today include:

- Sunamp's EXTEND project, East Lothian, Scotland – will receive £149,893 for a feasibility study to further develop the storage duration of their thermal batteries. They will look to pair their heat batteries with household energy systems to tackle periods of low renewables generation on the grid
- Cheesecake Energy's FlexiTanker project, Nottingham, England – will receive £139,411 to develop their thermal and compressed air energy storage technology to integrate more renewables into the grid, helping to fast-track the decarbonisation of the UK electricity system
- B9 Energy Storage's Ballylumford Power-to-X project, Larne, Northern Ireland – will receive £986,082 to mobilise an innovative 20MW Power-to-X project at Ballylumford. Green hydrogen produced by electrolysers will be stored in underground salt caverns and used for transport and to displace natural gas in fuel blending trials. This project paves the way for future large-scale deployments connected to offshore windfarms

Andrew Bissell, Chief Executive Officer at Sunamp said:

For the past decade, we have focused on decarbonising hot water and have delivered a world-beating 20,000 heat batteries using our phase change material into the market so far, and we are now bringing forward our Central Bank products for heat. Our thermal storage technology can be combined with heat pumps to deliver more than twice as much heat per unit of electricity on demand than direct electric heating. This funding will accelerate how we can further enhance thermal storage duration, working with wind energy from the grid and solar PV in homes, to provide heat and water during extended intervals of low renewables generation when green power is not available on the grid, eventually reducing the overall cost of operation to be lower than gas.

Larry Zulch, Chief Executive Officer at Invinity said:

The LODES initiatives are yet another demonstration of the UK's commitment to building a thriving low carbon economy. Invinity greatly appreciates BEIS's vision for that future, especially the vital role that safe, reliable and robust long-duration energy storage has to play on a Net Zero UK electric grid. In realizing that vision we are tremendously pleased to be working again with BEIS, Pivot Power and EDF to plan the deployment of a vanadium flow battery 8 times the size of the one currently operating at Energy Superhub Oxford.

The funding announced today is a key step towards supporting the development and commercialisation of innovative energy storage technologies, in turn supporting the UK's transition to relying on renewables, while also encouraging private investment and new green jobs.

The £68 million Longer Duration Energy Storage Demonstration competition is funded through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's £1 billion [Net Zero Innovation Portfolio](#), which aims to accelerate the commercialisation of innovative clean energy technologies and processes through the 2020s and 2030s.

This competition is being conducted in 2 phases, and across 2 streams. The 2 competition streams are designed to support technologies at different stages of development, with Stream 1 supporting actual demonstrations of the technologies, and Stream 2 supporting prototype demonstrations. Funding for Stream 1 is in the form of Capital Grants and the projects have been required to secure additional private investment.

Read a full list of the projects receiving funding under:

Phase 2 will build on Phase 1, selecting several of the Phase 1 projects for further funding to build and demonstrate their technology fully.

[New taskforce to level-up maternity care and tackle disparities](#)

- New Maternity Disparities Taskforce to explore reasons for disparities in maternity care and address poor outcomes for women from ethnic minority communities and those living in deprived areas
- This comes as data shows black women are 40% more likely to experience a miscarriage than white women, and deprived areas can have higher rates of still births
- Taskforce will identify the barriers faced and how the government can continue to improve care to further reduce the number of stillbirths and maternal deaths

A new Maternity Disparities Taskforce will tackle disparities in maternity care experienced by women from ethnic minority groups and those living in deprived areas.

The taskforce will be established by Minister for Patient Safety and Primary Care, Maria Caulfield, and co-chaired by Chief Midwifery Officer, Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent OBE, to make real progress in understanding the reasons for poor outcomes in maternity care.

The government has taken action to halve the rate of stillbirths, neonatal deaths, maternal deaths and brain injuries by 2025. The latest figures show the stillbirth rate has reduced by over 25% since 2010 and the neonatal mortality rate has reduced by 29%, surpassing the ambition for a 20% reduction by 2020.

However, while progress has been made, disparities continue to persist – the reasons for which remain unclear.

Data shows there is an almost 2-fold difference in mortality rates between women from Asian ethnic groups and white women, and they are also higher for black women. Studies have also found black women are 40% more likely to experience a miscarriage than white women.

Birmingham is one of the most deprived areas of the country and has the highest rates of neonatal mortality and stillbirths at 11.4 per 1,000. Birmingham also has a high number of low birth weight of all babies (9.7% in 2018) and a high prematurity rate.

Minister for Women's Health, Maria Caulfield, said:

For too long disparities have persisted which mean women living in deprived areas or from ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to get the care they need, and worse, lose their child. We must do better to understand and address the causes of this.

The Maternity Disparities Taskforce will help level up maternity care across the country, bringing together a wide range of experts to deliver real and ambitious change so we can improve care for all women, and I will be monitoring progress closely.

As a nurse, I know how incredibly challenging the last 2 years have been and would like to thank all our dedicated maternity staff for their hard work and commitment throughout the pandemic.

The taskforce seeks to increase understanding of the drivers behind the disparities, examine the social factors linked to poorer health outcomes and tackle these issues in order to improve the health and wellbeing of women and their babies.

It will seek to do so by looking to consider and support evidence-based interventions for the following areas:

- improving personalised care and support plans for mothers
- addressing how wider societal issues impact maternal health, working with experts in other government departments
- improving education and awareness of pre-conception health when trying to conceive, such as taking supplements before pregnancy and maintaining a healthy weight
- increasing access to maternity care for all women and developing targeted support for women from the most vulnerable groups
- empowering women to make evidence-based decisions about their care during pregnancy such as the development of a new digital framework, which provides women with support to make informed decisions during labour

The first meeting will be held on 8 March, with meetings held every 2 months to maintain and track progress, bringing together experts from across the health service, mothers, government and the voluntary sector, with membership to be published this month.

It will build on existing work by government and the NHS to improve care, for example the government has invested £5 million in the Brain Injury Reduction Programme to reduce the rate of brain injuries in babies occurring during or soon after births.

The NHS has produced equity and equality guidance to help local maternity systems address these disparities and the taskforce will work to improve cross-government working to address the social determinants of health for women and babies from ethnic minority groups and those living in the most deprived areas.

Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent, Chief Midwifery Officer for England, said:

The NHS' ambition is to be the safest place in the world to be pregnant, give birth and transition into parenthood. All women who use our maternity services should receive the best care possible, which is why the NHS is committed to reducing health inequalities and our equity and equality guidance sets out how the NHS will do this.

We welcome the extra impetus and support that the new taskforce will provide in tackling these important issues and look forward to participating in it.

Dr Edward Morris, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), said:

We strongly welcome this new Maternity Disparities Taskforce, which will aim to tackle the unacceptable inequalities that exist for women from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds when it comes to maternity outcomes.

The colour of someone's skin should never dictate whether they have a positive or negative birth experience. The RCOG's Race Equality Taskforce is committed to working with this new taskforce to understand why these disparities exist and create meaningful solutions to improve healthcare experiences and outcomes for all ethnic minority women.

Commenting, the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) Director for Professional Midwifery, Mary Ross- Davie said;

The disparities in outcomes and experience of maternity care for black and Asian women and women from other ethnic minority backgrounds are shocking, so the RCM welcomes the creation of the Maternity Disparities Taskforce and is keen to be part of the work in finding solutions. The RCM has long called for more consultant and specialist midwife posts in trusts and health boards to provide better support to women with pre-existing conditions such as increased BMI, high blood pressure, diabetes, and mental health conditions. In many parts of the UK, these midwife roles either do not exist or are very limited, yet they could make a huge difference to black and Asian women in particular.

There is some excellent work being done in some areas, so it would be good to see that experience shared across maternity services. Improvement of outcomes relies on sharing what works and what doesn't, so that we can bring about effective, consistent change. We look forward to working with colleagues on the taskforce to highlight the current problems and find ways to address them in a positive way.

To support maternity staff and families further, the NHS is increasing the maternity workforce further with a £95 million recruitment drive to hire 1,200 more midwives and 100 obstetricians.

See the [Maternity Disparities Taskforce terms of reference](#) (published 18 July 2022).

[Cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait is a historical achievement for multilateralism](#)

Thank you, Mr President. And may I start by thanking the UNCC's Governing

Council President, Ambassador Michael Gaffey, for today's briefing and to the Vice President of the Governing Council, represented by Ambassador Lucy Kiruthu, for her support. Thank you and welcome too to Dr Fuad Hussein, Iraq's Minister for Foreign Affairs, and to Kuwait's Ambassador Mansour Ayyad Al-Otaibi.

As we've heard, following the Special Session of the Governing Council on 9 February, the Security Council meets today to discuss the resolution, which acknowledges the fulfilment of the Commission's mandate and instructs the winding down of all its activities. After thirty years, the UNCC represents an important success for the international rules based order, as Ambassador Gaffey said, a historical achievement for multilateralism in achieving reconciliation after conflict and solutions to large-scale and complex problems related to conflict. The novel work undertaken by the UNCC has required the close cooperation and engagement of Iraq and Kuwait, who have both contributed to ensure the success of the UNCC.

Security Council Resolution 687 of 1991 affirmed Iraq as liable under international law for any direct loss, damage or injury to foreign Government, nationals and corporations as a result of the unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait. The Security Council acted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to establish the UNCC as a means to process claims in respect of that liability. Since then, as we heard, the Commission has paid out \$52.4 billion in compensation to more than 1.5 million claimants. The final payment of over \$600,000 made in January of this year marked the fulfilment of the Commission's mandate after more than 30 years. With the completion of the mandate, Iraq has now fulfilled its obligations in relation to this Chapter VII measure.

We commend Iraq's commitment to its payment under various governments and in exceptionally difficult economic and security circumstances. We also take this opportunity to reflect on what the successful completion of the Commission's mandate represents: not only is it a reminder of the consequences of breaching international law, it's also an example of what we can achieve through positive cooperation at the United Nations.

We would like to extend our thanks to the Commission's Secretariat, past and present, for their tireless commitment and work to date. And we are confident the Secretariat will complete its remaining tasks with the high level of diligence they have maintained throughout. The United Kingdom stands ready to support all actions necessary to take forward the dissolution of the Commission by the end of this year.

Finally Mr President, the United Kingdom expresses its gratitude to colleagues on this Council for their constructive engagement on the resolution before us today, which helps to draw to a close, the long but ultimately successful endeavour of the Commission.

I thank you, Mr President.

Continued violence in the Central African Republic undermines the chance for inclusive political dialogue

Thank you, Madam President, and thank you to the Special Representative to the AU, Special Representative, and to Mr Caholo.

Firstly, the United Kingdom is concerned that the continued violence in the Central African Republic undermines the chance for inclusive political dialogue. We urge all parties to respect the ceasefire.

We also welcome the return of opposition parties to the Republican Dialogue process and acknowledge the immense efforts on the Luanda joint roadmap initiative. This is positive progress. The political agreement remains the only way to achieve long-term peace and stability for the citizens of the Central African Republic.

Secondly, the United Kingdom remains concerned by the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the CAR and the on-going threats to civilians. The high levels of displacement and conflict-related sexual violence highlighted in the Secretary-General's report are unacceptable. And the on-going targeting of humanitarian personnel and denial of humanitarian access must stop.

Sadly, reporting shows that violations of International Humanitarian Law, and violations and abuses of human rights by all parties to the conflict continue. The United Kingdom deplores the indiscriminate killings of unarmed civilians, and targeting of Fulani and Muslim communities by the FACA and the Russian mercenary group, Wagner – as we've heard from others. Wagner plays a destabilising role in the country. Its presence undermines the work of the UN mission to the detriment of the citizens of the CAR. We call on the government to ensure the full application in the country of international humanitarian and human rights law and that all perpetrators of violations or abuses are held to account.

Thirdly, I want to touch on threats to the safety and security of UN peacekeepers. We note the decrease in violations of the status-of-forces agreement in the last reporting period. However, we continue to call for clarity regarding the attack on a UN police bus last November which resulted in UN casualties and a civilian death.

We are also deeply concerned by the jamming of MINUSCA's GPS signals and satellite communications. This requires urgent investigation. Any delay in resolving the issue will put UN civilian and uniformed personnel at unacceptable risk.

Lastly, I'd like to once again emphasise that the arms embargo exists to prevent weapons falling into the hands of armed groups and fuelling violence. It is not intended to prevent the government from obtaining the equipment it needs for defence and security sector reform. Indeed, to date, the Committee has approved all exemption requests submitted under the framework of the arms embargo.

We welcome any progress the government has made in regards to meeting the Council's benchmarks, but it's critical that the block on the Panel of Experts is lifted soon.

And finally, Madam President, if I may, I would like to add my voice to those of my Council colleagues to thank the Special Representative for his tireless work and service over the past three years and wish him the best in his future endeavours.

Thank you

[Home Secretary calls with international partners](#)

The Home Secretary Priti Patel today held a series of calls and meetings to discuss the situation in Ukraine with key international partners.

She spoke to her counterparts from Latvia and the Czech Republic – Marija Golubeva, Interior Minister of Latvia, and Vit Rakušan, Czech Interior Minister – and also had a conversation with the Polish Ambassador to the UK, Piotr Wilczek, and met the Canadian High Commissioner to the UK, Ralph Goodale.

In all these conversations the Home Secretary underlined that the UK stands in solidarity with Ukraine and that a united international response to Russian aggression was the best way to protect innocent lives and each other's homeland security.

It was deemed vital that diplomatic efforts continued to try and seek a resolution to this situation, but that appropriate action also needed to be taken in order to demonstrate the seriousness with which Russia's actions are viewed by the international community.

In this respect, the Home Secretary was able to share details of the sanctions announced by the Prime Minister against five Russian banks and other individuals today.

She repeated her condemnation of the escalation of Russian disinformation operations and noted the worrying reports of malicious cyber incidents in

Ukraine, which represent serious and hostile acts.

Another common theme on which partners agreed was on the importance of a safe, orderly and managed approach to migration and migration flows resulting within the region as a result of the current crisis.

The Home Secretary agreed to keep open lines of communication with her international partners in the coming days.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

This is a fast-moving situation but through discussions with my international counterparts there has been universal condemnation for Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

The people of Ukraine can be reassured that there is an international determination amongst friends and allies to speak with one voice in response to recent events and we are already demonstrating that Russia's actions have serious consequences.