

Student Loans Company Appoints Atos as final Strategic Partner

The Student Loans Company (SLC) has announced the appointment of Atos as its fourth and final Strategic Partner for Customer Software Delivery which will include the development, maintenance, and support of SLC customer and user facing systems.

SLC's Strategic Partnership Programme involves working with a small number of skilled partners to modernise, deliver and support its technology estate as part of a technical transformation programme. Following a highly competitive procurement exercise, Atos completes the Strategic Partner appointments under the programme, alongside Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Capgemini.

Atos was awarded the first contract in September 2020 to support SLC's Customer Enablement Services – including the development of its customer interface and the associated technology infrastructure. In this fourth and final contract, Atos will provide a broad range of outcome-based services and capabilities which will be key to delivering the over-arching expertise, services, capabilities, and capacity required by SLC's Technology strategy. This includes Modern Application Development and Maintenance (ADM) and Support Services, including on-premises and Cloud based, bespoke, Commercial of the Shelf (COTS) and Software as a Service (SaaS) products, which will develop the technical capabilities and deliver on critical policy.

Stephen Campbell, Chief Technology Officer at SLC said: "I am pleased to confirm that our Strategic Partner Procurement Programme has now concluded with the appointment of Atos as the final Strategic Partner for Customer Software Delivery (CSD2).

"This appointment will ensure the continuity of key IT service provision, enable the transition to new and emerging technologies, and support the delivery of key policy objectives going forward, such as the Government's Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE)."

Clay Van Doren, Atos CEO for Northern Europe, APAC and Central Europe, said: "This agreement allows SLC and Atos to deliver a comprehensive programme of IT estate modernisation and transformation, elevating SLC's services offering thereby positioning it for continued success."

Nearly 350 foreign criminals and

immigration offenders removed

The regular schedule of returns flights is an important strand of the government's work to keep the public safe and tackle illegal migration, by speeding up the return of foreign criminals and illegal migrants with no right to be in the UK.

Last month's removals include 22 people who were directly removed to their home country from Manston, the migrant processing centre in Kent.

Home Secretary Suella Braverman said:

The number of people reaching the UK illegally in small boats is at an all-time high and is putting our asylum system under intense strain.

By returning hundreds of people coming here illegally and dangerous foreign criminals in this way, we are sending a clear message that those with no right to be in the UK are not welcome here.

I have been clear that I am exploring every avenue at my disposal to accelerate their removal.

A total of 347 people were removed on five charter and multiple scheduled flights last month.

This included 230 foreign national offenders who were convicted of serious crimes including rape, assault, drug offences, possession of an offensive weapon and illegal entry.

The Home Office also returned 117 immigration offenders in October, including two people who arrived via small boats and were removed within 24 days, and another person who was removed within 27 days.

Of the 347 people returned, 118 were to Albania, 39 to Brazil, 38 to Romania, 26 to Poland, 20 to Lithuania, among returns to over 40 other countries.

To date this year, the UK has removed over 10,400 individuals via enforced and voluntary returns, including over 2,500 foreign national offenders. Within that time, the French authorities have prevented over 29,000 crossings and destroyed over 1,000 small boats.

The Home Office has arrested 244 people since the Nationality and Borders Act became law in June. A total of 175 people have been charged, and 94 have received convictions amounting to total combined sentences of 53 years. Of the 244 arrests, 72 have been for facilitation of small boats crossings.

As part of government's wider work to tackle illegal migration, the Home Office announced on Sunday that it was rolling out a successful pilot which

doubled the number of asylum cases progressed per week by streamlining and digitising the system to speed up processes. This resulted in faster decisions, in turn helping to save money, and the pilot will now be rolled out across the UK to help tackle the backlog of people awaiting a decision on their claim.

Figures for recent returns totals are sourced from provisional operational data. Comprehensive statistics on returns are published in the [Home Office quarterly immigration statistics and migration transparency data](#), and the latest available data was published on 25 August.

Bankrupt caterer abused Covid-19 loan scheme

Mohammed Abdul Subhan (47), from West Bromwich, started a self-employment catering business called Thania Spice in 2016 before incorporating Zara Spice Limited, which traded as a restaurant from Bilston Street in Dudley.

In 2020 Mohammed Subhan focussed his attention back to his self-employment business. But by March 2022, Mohammed Subhan could not pay his debts and applied for his own bankruptcy.

The Official Receiver was appointed as his Trustee before uncovering Mohammed Subhan had abused £70,000 worth of loans.

Mohammed Subhan declared that the self-employed business Thania Spice had a turnover of £200,000 and secured the maximum £50,000 Bounce Back Loan. But Mohammed Subhan's actual turnover was closer to £3,000 to £4,000 in 2019, which would have not made him eligible for the government backed loan.

The caterer also failed to use all the money for the benefit of the business, contrary to the terms of the Bounce Back scheme, having withdrawn the funds in cash.

Further enquiries by the Official Receiver found that when the government loan ran out in November 2021, Mohammed Subhan inflated his income and applied for two further loans worth £20,000 – despite being insolvent.

Mohammed Subhan withdrew more than half the funds in cash and used £13,500 for non-essential expenditure.

Due to the risks he posed to creditors, the Official Receiver sought to impose additional bankruptcy restrictions against Mohammed Subhan.

On 27 October, Mohammed Subhan had his 11-year bankruptcy restrictions undertaking accepted by the Secretary of State. His bankruptcy undertaking

means he is limited to what credit he can access, as well as not being able to act as a company director without the permission of the court.

Deputy Official Receiver, Karen Fox, said:

Throughout our enquiries, Mohammed Subhan failed to provide adequate evidence of what he used the loans on, whether it benefited the business or that he had any reasonable expectation of repaying the loans back.

He posed a significant risk to creditors and 11 years of restrictions will severely curtail Mohammed Subhan's ability to abuse his future lenders.

Mohammed Abdul Subhan is from West Bromwich and his date of birth is March 1975

Details of his 11-year Bankruptcy Restrictions Undertaking is available on the [Individual Insolvency Register](#).

Bankruptcy restrictions are wide ranging. The effects are the same whether you are subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or to an undertaking. Guidance on the main statutory consequences flowing from a [bankruptcy restrictions order or undertaking](#).

[Information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

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Ground-breaking apprenticeship programme for the forestry sector to re-open

Building upon a successful intake of apprentices this year, the Forestry Commission has announced it will reopen its Woodland Officer programme in 2023, the first-of-its-kind apprenticeship initiative to foster a growing, highly skilled and diverse workforce within the forestry sector.

The Development Woodland Officer programme offers a three-year, paid development opportunity for passionate individuals from all backgrounds looking to kickstart their careers in forestry. It aims to grow and upskill the forestry sector workforce and is open to school leavers, graduates or anyone looking for a change in career direction. The programme supports jobs and opportunities in rural communities and helps increase capacity to meet tree planting and forest management needs to deliver the Government's tree planting and woodland creation ambitions over the coming years.

Following in the footsteps of the original cohort, Development Woodland Officers will benefit from academic studies in forestry management at the University of Cumbria, practical experience in Forestry Commission area teams across England, and nine months of wider sector placements to further build their skills and experience, enhancing future employment prospects.

Upon completion of the programme, successful graduates will earn a Professional Forester Apprenticeship (equivalent to Level 6), a BSc (Hons) in Forest Management and the potential to gain Chartered Forester status with the Institute of Chartered Foresters. Forestry Commission are also working with other employers in the sector to open up more opportunities for apprentices to join this programme

Forestry Commission Chief Executive, Richard Stanford said:

The Development Woodland Officer programme is an exciting career pathway into forestry in general and the Forestry Commission in particular. The programme offers a wide range of forestry and silvicultural experiences to build knowledge across the entire forestry sector.

I have seen first-hand the success of this programme, our current students are thriving through a unique mix of hands-on experience and academic studies as well as being in paid employment. I encourage people from all backgrounds and abilities interested in a rewarding career in forestry to apply.

Gareth Biggins, Development Woodland Officer Apprentice:

I joined the DWO programme in 2022, having worked in the rail industry for 15 years. I wanted to make a career change into forestry for some time and the programme offers a great way to achieve this while working to protect and expand our woodlands.

Since joining I have acquired new skills, knowledge and experience and have enjoyed the opportunity to work towards a degree level qualification alongside on the job training and interaction with colleagues from across the forestry sector.

Dr Helen Manns, Director, Institute of Science and Environment, University of Cumbria, said:

We are thrilled that our first forestry apprentices are immersing themselves in this trailblazing professional programme. As a university, it is our mission to address higher level and industry skills needs and we do this collaboratively with employers and partners, co-creating programmes like the Professional Forester degree-level apprenticeship, enabling us to help to grow, upskill and diversify the workforce of sectors including forestry.

We are delighted that we can help the Forestry Commission with an apprenticeship programme that supports their Development Woodland Officer Programme, working alongside them and other partners in our shared ambitions to expand the long-term capacity of the sector and to deliver national ambitions for a skilled workforce in the coming years.

Louise Simpson, Executive Director, Institute of Chartered Foresters, said:

The Development Woodland Officer apprenticeship is an exciting new route into the industry. The demand for the programme is a clear indication of how important a role degree level apprenticeship will play in bringing new people into the sector.

Today's announcement forms part of the England Trees Action Plan, which set out [plans to treble tree planting rates in England during this Parliament](#), funded through £650 million from the Nature for Climate Fund. It also forms part of wider Government action to create new green jobs across the country and boost the economy.

The first cohort of 19 Officers started in September this year. Up to 45 Development Woodland Officer positions will be created over the next three

years. In addition to these Officers, the programme will also train further students from the Woodland Trust and National Trust, who will join the Forestry Commission Programme to expand their knowledge and experience within the Forestry sector.

The Forestry Commission are also interested in working with partners within the sector to develop the offer on an ongoing basis. If you would like to find out more about the Development Woodland Officer programme or the Professional Forester Apprenticeship, are considering offering apprenticeship positions or would like to offer support with work placements, please contact: DW0enquiries@forestrycommission.gov.uk