

Virgin Money teams up with UK Government to support more small businesses

Press release

Virgin Money has been accredited under UK Export Finance's General Export Facility programme, allowing more businesses to access export finance support.



- Virgin Money joins six existing lenders: HSBC, Santander, Barclays, Lloyds, NatWest and Newable, making the General Export Facility even more accessible.
- Oxfordshire based Westminster Group, which provides security equipment and services worldwide, is the first to benefit from a Virgin Money GEF.
- Accreditation and deal announced during a UKEF-Virgin Money roundtable event during International Trade Week, discussing how both organisations can collaborate to support more SMEs in challenging economic times.

Samir Parkash, interim CEO of UKEF, has today announced that Virgin Money is the latest financial institution to be onboarded onto the [General Export Facility](#) (GEF), opening up access to financial support to their business customers.

GEF was launched in March 2021 and is designed to provide access to flexible finance for SME exporters.

It has been a game-changing product unlocking almost £250 million of working capital loans.

Samir Parkash, interim Chief Executive Officer at UK Export Finance, said:

The General Export Facility provides vital hands-on government support to British small businesses. Since it was introduced last year it has unlocked almost £250 million of working capital loans

and underpinned (the liquidity requirements of) hundreds of small businesses.

We want more businesses to have access to this support from UKEF which is why I am delighted to announce that the clients of Virgin Money can now use the scheme.

Virgin Money and UKEF's first collaboration under GEF is to provide support to the Oxfordshire based company Westminster Group. The backing has enabled the business to win new export contracts to supply X-Ray security machines to two international airports in Southern Africa.

Sharon Ellis, Head of Business Networks at Virgin Money, said:

Virgin Money is committed to supporting businesses with their growth ambitions at this key time for the economy.

We are pleased to be fully operational with the General Export Facility in conjunction with UKEF, as it enables us to increase access to financial support for businesses like Westminster Group, which is a great example of our relationship teams and trade finance specialists working together to find exactly the right solution to meet the customer's needs.

To be eligible for support, businesses must meet several criteria, including showing that in any one of the last three financial years at least 20% of annual turnover has been made up of UK export sales, or that in each of the last three financial years at least 5% of annual turnover has been made up of UK export sales.

Published 4 November 2022

[Secretary of State for NI provides update on election](#)

Press release

Secretary of State for NI provides update on election



Following discussions with NI party leaders, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris MP, confirms an election will not take place in December.

Heaton-Harris said:

“At midnight on 28 October, I came under a duty to call an Assembly election. Since then, my engagement with the political parties has continued. I have had valuable conversations with people across Northern Ireland, including business and community representatives. I have listened to their sincere concerns about the impact and cost of an election at this time.

“I can now confirm that no Assembly election will take place in December, or ahead of the festive season. Current legislation requires me to name a date for an election to take place within 12 weeks of 28 October and next week, I will make a statement in Parliament to lay out my next steps.

“My objective, what the people of Northern Ireland deserve, is the restoration of a strong devolved government. My duty is to create the right environment for the parties in Northern Ireland to work together to restore the devolved institutions and deliver on crucial issues impacting Northern Ireland’s people.

“I do not take this duty lightly, nor do I overlook the very real concerns people have around their cost of living.”

Published 4 November 2022

[New Business Secretary announces £95 million funding for super-materials of the future to boost UK growth](#)

- “R&D investment is way to turbocharge Britain’s growth” says new

Business Secretary, as £95 million government funding announced to support research and development of advanced materials, critical to sectors including health and energy

- funded projects include 3D bioprinting for use in tissue engineering, robots for plastic recycling and casing for nuclear reactors
- funding cements UK's standing as world-leader in advanced materials, with advanced materials-related activity contributing an estimated £14.4 billion in gross value added to the UK economy, equivalent to around £72,000 per employee (25% above the UK average)

Business Secretary Grant Shapps has today (Thursday 3 November) announced a £95 million boost to develop the super-materials of the future, supporting research and innovation in advanced materials at the Henry Royce Institute, headquartered in Manchester.

The Business Secretary visited the Royce Institute today, in what was his first official trip since assuming the role at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, allowing him to emphasise his strong belief that R&D investment is an important way in which to turbocharge UK economic growth, as well as celebrating Manchester's position as an industrial powerhouse in the north of England.

The significant cash injection, awarded via the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), cements the UK's position as world-leader in advanced materials, and follows an initial £258 million government investment made over the course of 5 years.

Advanced materials (including biomaterials, smart materials and nano-engineered materials) possess unique properties enabling superior performance to their traditional counterparts, and are critical in a wide range of industries including health, transport, energy, electronics and utilities.

Activities supported by Royce and backed by government funding, have included 3D bioprinting for healthcare uses such as tissue engineering in regenerative medicine, turning waste materials into sustainable plastics, and new materials to enable quantum technologies.

One project also brought together academia and industry to advance knowledge of how Zirconium alloy insulation can improve the safety and cost-efficiency of highly radioactive fuel used in nuclear reactors as well as reducing their carbon emissions. This technology could be essential to the success of Britain's future nuclear fleet, which the government aims to ramp up in order to boost energy security and slash bills.

Another project is revolutionising the way the UK's 35,000 tonnes of annually imported titanium, 90% of which is turned into waste during manufacturing, can be reused to create lightweight alloys used for more efficient vehicles, cutting waste and reducing emissions.

The funding announced this week will advance the Institute's work to support early-stage research in these materials by providing financial backing, access to research facilities, and opportunities for collaboration between

businesses and researchers.

Speaking during a visit to the Institute, based at The University of Manchester, the Business Secretary said:

R&D investment is a critical way to turbocharge Britain's growth. Growing an economy fit for the future means harnessing the full potential of advanced materials, making science fiction a reality by supporting projects from regenerative medicine to robots developing new recycling capabilities, right across the country – including here in the heart of Manchester.

Today's £95 million investment will do just that, bringing together the brightest minds across our businesses and institutions to help future-proof sectors from healthcare to nuclear energy.

The Royce was formed in 2015 with a £235 million government investment through EPSRC. To date, the Royce has worked with 295 UK SMEs and industry users and facilitated 350 collaborations between academia and industry.

Its mission is to support the growth of globally recognised excellence in UK materials research, accelerating their use in commercial settings and delivering positive, real-world impacts for our society and economy.

Examples of projects supported so far include:

- new fuel cladding for fuel in advanced reactors to improve safety, cost and efficiency
- developing materials needed for quantum computing
- using waste materials from the shellfish industries to develop bioplastics
- an innovative method for manufacturing titanium that greatly uses machining waste
- using computer simulations and robots to accelerate materials discovery in clean energy, sustainable materials and healthcare applications
- the use of 3D bioprinting techniques in the development and manufacture of bioengineered systems and devices for application in Tissue Engineering, Regenerative Medicine, Drug Development and other more traditional areas of healthcare

Advanced Materials and Manufacturing were identified in the government's [Innovation Strategy](#) as 1 of 7 technology families in which the UK has globally competitive R&D and industrial strength.

EPSRC Executive Chair Professor Dame Lynn Gladden said:

Advanced materials are crucial to driving growth across our key industries, from energy and transport to health, and ensuring they are sustainable for the future.

This funding will build on the success of the Henry Royce Institute so far, to unleash the potential of this transformative technology for the benefit of the economy and the environment.

Professor David Knowles, Royce CEO said:

Royce and its Partners across the UK, along with the advanced materials community, is very pleased to be able to confirm this Phase II EPSRC funding.

Innovation in advanced materials underpins a wider range of our industrial sectors and is fundamental to our economic growth.

Our Partnership offers a unique combination of materials science expertise, state-of-the-art laboratories and fantastic collaboration spaces for the advanced materials community.

As we enter our Phase II operations we are focused now, more than ever, on working with the community to identify the key challenges and opportunities ahead of us, and supporting the translation of innovative research into the viable products and systems needed to ensure a sustainable future for us all.

Based at the University of Manchester, Royce works across the UK's regions with academic and industry partners including Johnson Matthey, Rolls-Royce, Siemens and Tata Steel, to stimulate innovation and the development of strong local economies able to compete globally.

Stephen Phipson CBE, Chief Executive of MakeUK said:

This is a welcome announcement which recognises the world class research which takes place at this facility.

If we are to maintain the UK's position as a leader in research and development together with advanced manufacturing and materials then facilities like this should be at the forefront of industrial strategy.

UK businesses dependent on production or processing of materials, in which advanced materials play a significant role, employ a workforce of 2.5 million ([source](#)).

Additional quotes

Dr Giorgia Longobardi, CEO of Cambridge GaN Devices:

Access to the Royce High Voltage Characterisation Suite has brought us one step closer to achieving a significant share of the rapidly

growing Gallium nitride (GaN) market, which is predicted to be in excess of \$1 billion by 2026.

Bringing to market CGD green technology will help the world's net-zero targets via the deployment of energy-efficient power electronics. The project also allowed the creation of several new roles and enabled the entry of CGD into the scale-up phase.

Dr Carmen Palacios-Berraquero, CEO of Nu Quantum:

We've been delighted with the project with Royce; access to their state-of-the-art facilities and know-how have accelerated our progress with quantum-photonic micro-structures to capture individual photons. These structures will form a valuable part of our quantum-networking solutions that will access the Quantum Computing market, estimated to be worth between \$450 billion to \$850 billion at maturity. The project has also helped unlock potential early revenue opportunities.

Richard Price, Chief Technology Officer, PragmatIC:

PragmatIC worked with the Royce SMI Hub on an important collaborative research project, on the end-of-life recycling options for our FlexIC-incorporated Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags, and to conduct a cradle-to-grave life cycle assessment of a typical application. The project, including a research secondment for Sustainability Lead, Dr Ashiq Ahamed, gave him the opportunity to develop a number of new, expert skills and greatly improve his knowledge, alongside interaction and knowledge sharing with Royce researchers who possess a variety of expert skill sets and differing backgrounds, and prolonged exposure to other research activities and projects within the Hub.

We're currently in the process of extending the collaboration with the Royce and this offers the opportunity for continued collaboration, and a possible joint venture within a funded research project.

[Prince William Unveils Kenya's Roam And Mukuru Clean Stoves As Finalists](#)

For Earthshot Prize

- British High Commissioner Jane Marriott praises Roam and Mukuru Clean Stoves for their innovative solutions to help repair and regenerate the planet – another example of Kenya’s pioneering commitment to green, clean energy.
- The UK-Kenya Climate partnership has driven investment in clean air projects, including helping Roam secure £6.6m worth of investment.
- The Prince and Princess of Wales will attend the awards in Boston on December 2 to honour the Finalists and celebrate the five 2022 Earthshot Prize Winners.

November 4, 2022 – Today, Prince William and The Earthshot Prize revealed that Roam and Mukuru Clean Stoves, both Kenyan companies, have been selected as Finalists for the second Earthshot Prize. Together, the Finalists are an accomplished group of entrepreneurs and innovators spearheading fifteen groundbreaking solutions to the biggest environmental challenges our planet faces.

The fifteen Finalists will be in the running to receive a £1 million award at the second-annual Earthshot Prize awards ceremony. The Prize takes inspiration from President John F. Kennedy’s ‘Moonshot,’ which united millions of people around an organising goal to put man on the moon and catalysed the development of new technology in the 1960s.

Prince William said:

The innovators, leaders, and visionaries that make up our 2022 Earthshot Finalists prove there are many reasons to be optimistic about the future of our planet. They are directing their time, energy, and talent towards bold solutions with the power to not only solve our planet’s greatest environmental challenges, but to create healthier, more prosperous, and more sustainable communities for generations to come.

I am so excited to celebrate these fifteen Finalists and see the five Winners of The Earthshot Prize announced in Boston – the hometown of President John F. Kennedy, who shared The Earthshot Prize’s belief that seemingly impossible goals are within reach if we only harness the limitless power of innovation, human ingenuity, and urgent optimism.

The UK-Kenya Climate partnership has driven investment in clean air projects,

including helping Roam secure £6.6m worth of investment to expand their operation.

British High Commissioner to Kenya, Jane Marriott, said:

As Kenya continues to be a pioneer of green, clean energy, it comes as no surprise that Prince William and The Earthshot Prize are honouring Roam and Mukuru Clean Stoves – two of Kenya’s most innovative companies – bringing the total to three Earthshot finalists in two years. Both are an example of Kenya’s renewed commitment to clean air, and inspiring positive climate action. Both organisations empower women to lead – and make a living by making a difference. The UK is proud to have supported Roam to secure investment to grow their innovative operation. We look forward to taking the UK-Kenya Climate Partnership further at COP27 in Egypt.

Mukuru Clean Stoves is a female-led start-up providing cleaner-burning stoves to women in Kenya to reduce unhealthy indoor pollution and provide a safer way to cook. Today, 200,000 people in Kenya use Mukuru Clean Stoves, saving \$10 million in fuel costs, saving lives, and saving time. Mukuru is empowering women to make a living by making a difference.

Charlot Magayi, founder of Mukuru Clean Stoves, said:

Mukuru Clean Stoves began as a solution to a problem that I had felt personally in my own life. Today, we have an opportunity to transform the lives of millions, with cheaper, safer and more sustainable cookstoves and fuels. It is a privilege to be recognised by The Earthshot Prize as we embark on the next step in our journey.

Roam is an organisation building lower emission vehicles, making clean transportation accessible and affordable for urban cities on the African continent. . The company builds motorcycles and buses tailored to the market with affordability and reliability at the forefront. 40% of Roam’s employees are female, and estimate that by switching from petrol to electricity, drivers can cut running costs by 75%.

Filip Lovstrom, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder of Roam, said:

In Kenya, motorcycle taxis so called Boda Boda’s are the best way to get around and many rely on them for a living. However, they are also among the highest CO2 emitting vehicles on the market. The company builds motorcycles and buses tailored to the market with affordability and reliability at the forefront. We want to help the

environment, and drivers' pockets. We are honoured to be recognised alongside so many other brilliant solutions.

This is Kenya's third Earthshot finalist in two years. In 2021, Kenyan company Sanergy was a finalist in the 'Build a Waste-Free World' category. They were already the largest waste recycling factory in Eastern Central Africa and they now serve three more cities in Kenya. A successful new investment round will allow international expansion. The Earthshot Prize Global Alliance Members, Deloitte and Arup have supported with training, advice and project design.

Mukuru Clean Stoves

Charlot Magayi grew up in Mukuru, one of Nairobi's largest slums. For years, she sold charcoal for fuel. That charcoal was the cause of regular respiratory infections for her and her neighbours. Then, in 2012, her daughter was severely burnt by a charcoal-burning stove. Seeking a better solution, in 2017 Magayi founded Mukuru Clean Stoves. Across Africa, 700 million people use solid fuel to cook on open fires and cookstoves that emit toxic chemicals and lack safeguards. As a result, each year accidents and air pollution kill four million people. Mukuru Clean Stoves are different. Rather than burning dangerous solid fuels, they use processed biomass made from charcoal, wood and sugarcane. This burns cleaner, creating 90% less pollution than an open fire and 70 % less than a traditional cookstove. They are cheaper too, costing just \$10 and halving ongoing fuel costs. Today, 200,000 people in Kenya use Mukuru Clean Stoves, saving \$10 million in fuel costs and saving lives too. In rural areas, where young girls often spend three hours a day collecting firewood, they also save precious time. A female-founded business with mostly female staff and distribution agents, Mukuru is empowering women to make a living by making a difference. Today, Magayi plans to create an even cleaner stove that burns ethanol. In three years, she hopes to reach one million customers. In ten years, she plans to reach ten million people all over Africa.

Roam

The electric vehicle revolution is coming to East Africa. Founded in 2017, Roam began as a research project at a Swedish university. Five years on, the company is bringing affordable, electric transport to one of the world's fastest growing economies: Kenya. In Kenya, motorcycle taxis are the easiest and cheapest way to get around. But the ubiquitous Boda Bodas are major polluters. These motorcycles are among the highest CO2 emitting vehicles on the market, but almost 6% of East Africans rely on them for their daily income. Electric alternatives are either unreliable, of poor quality or too expensive for most Kenyans. Roam spotted an opportunity: electric vehicles made in Africa, designed for the African market. All at the same time designing everything locally with 40% female employees in all areas. The company builds motorcycles and buses tailored to the market with affordability and reliability at the forefront. In harsh terrain, Roam has tested 160 prototypes, raised more than \$7.5 million and run a successful pilot programme with M-Kopa, one of the largest asset financiers on the

continent. Now the company is poised to scale, with plans to produce 150,000 motorcycles and 800 buses per year by 2026. This is just the start. Roam aims to make electric transport accessible to a far broader market, setting the standard for electric mobility in Africa. The key is the price tag. Because electricity is cheaper than petrol, Roam estimates drivers can cut running costs by 75% – an incentive that works for both people and the planet.

The Earthshot Prize

The Earthshot Prize is centred around five ‘Earthshots’ – simple, ambitious, and aspirational goals defining the world we wish to build for future generations. The 2022 Earthshot Prize Finalists are:

The Earthshot Prize to Protect and Restore Nature

1. Desert Agricultural Transformation, China: A team developing cutting-edge agricultural breakthroughs to turn barren desert landscapes into lush, green ones.
2. Hutan, Malaysia: An inspiring conservation model that protects orangutans, supports local jobs and livelihoods and restores forests to their former greatness.
3. Kheyti, India: A pioneering solution for local smallholder farmers to reduce costs, increase yields and protect livelihoods in a country on the frontlines of climate change.

The Earthshot Prize to Clean Our Air

1. The Ampd Enertainer, Hong Kong: An emission-free electric battery system to power construction and reduce pollution.
2. Mukuru Clean Stoves, Kenya: A start-up providing cleaner-burning stoves to women in Kenya to reduce unhealthy indoor pollution and provide a safer way to cook.
3. Roam, Kenya: An organisation building lower emission vehicles, making clean transportation accessible and affordable for urban cities on the African continent.

The Earthshot Prize to Revive Our Oceans

1. The Great Bubble Barrier, Netherlands: Inventive and ingenious technique to intercept plastics before they reach oceans by creating a curtain of

bubbles.

2. Indigenous Women of the Great Barrier Reef, Australia: An inspiring women-led programme that combines 60,000 years of indigenous knowledge with digital technologies to protect land and sea.
3. SeaForester, Portugal: A truly cutting-edge breakthrough in seaweed farming that can restore the ocean's forgotten forests.

The Earthshot Prize to Build A Waste-Free World

1. City of Amsterdam Circular Economy, Netherlands: A city-wide initiative to establish a fully circular economy by 2050, wasting nothing and recycling everything.
2. Fleather, India: An innovative and regenerative approach to creating leather out of floral waste.
3. Notpla, United Kingdom: A circular solution creating an alternative to plastic packaging from seaweed.

The Earthshot Prize to Fix Our Climate

1. LanzaTech, USA: A circular solution that recycles carbon waste into sustainable fuels and everyday products.
2. Low Carbon Materials, United Kingdom: A new and innovative material that uses unrecyclable plastic waste to make traditional concrete blocks carbon zero.
3. 44.01, Oman: Childhood friends who have developed an innovative technique to turn CO₂ into rock, and permanently store it underground.

In addition to their eligibility for the £1 million prize, all Finalists will receive tailored support and resources from The Earthshot Prize Global Alliance Members, an unprecedented network of private sector businesses around the world committed to helping scale innovative climate and environmental solutions and multiplying their impact.

The five Winners will be selected by The Earthshot Prize Council, a diverse team of influential individuals committed to using their platforms to champion inspiring leadership and elevate urgent efforts to repair and regenerate the planet. The Earthshot Prize Council Members include: HRH Prince William, Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan, Cate

Blanchett, Daniel Alves Da Silva, Sir David Attenborough, Ernest Gibson, Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Jack Ma, Shakira Mebarak, Yao Ming, Luisa Neubauer, Indra Nooyi, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and Naoko Yamazaki.

A truly global project, The Earthshot Prize convenes a diverse nominator coalition of more than 200 people and organisations around the world from every continent, a distinguished Expert Advisory Panel, and The Earthshot Prize Council comprising influential individuals committed to championing positive environmental action.

The fifteen Finalists were assessed by the Expert Advisory Panel of scientific, academic, and subject-matter leaders. Each of the Finalist's solutions excelled in the rigorous screening process and were assessed on their potential to create game-changing impact around the world, and their ability to help us reach our Earthshot challenges while positively impacting people, communities, and the natural world.

For more information about The Earthshot Prize 2022 Finalists, please visit www.earthshotprize.org.

The Earthshot Prize awards ceremony will take place on Friday, December 2 at the MGM Music Hall in Boston. It will air around the world on BBC in the UK and PBS in the United States. The show will also be available globally on YouTube. It will premiere on Sunday, December 4.

For press interested in attending and covering The Earthshot Prize awards ceremony in Boston on December 2, please email earthshotprize2022@fgsglobal.com with a copy of your press badge to apply for credentials.

About The Earthshot Prize:

Founded by Prince William and The Royal Foundation in 2020, The Earthshot Prize is a global environmental prize to discover, accelerate, and scale ground-breaking solutions to repair and regenerate the planet. Inspired by President John F. Kennedy's Moonshot which united millions of people around the goal of reaching the moon, The Earthshot Prize aims to catalyse an Earthshot challenge to urgently encourage and scale innovative solutions that can help put the world firmly on a trajectory towards a stable climate, where communities, oceans, and biodiversity thrive in harmony by 2030.

The five Earthshot challenges are:

- Protect and Restore Nature;
- Clean Our Air;
- Revive Our Oceans;
- Build a Waste-free World; and
- Fix Our Climate.

The Prize aims to turn the current pessimism surrounding environmental issues into optimism, by championing inspiring leadership and helping to scale incredible cutting-edge solutions. More than a Prize, it works in partnership

with a Global Alliance of Partners to support the scaling of the solutions discovered and selected each year.

New for 2022, The Earthshot Prize is launching its Fellowship Programme, in partnership with IDEO. The Fellowship is a unique accelerator designed to help Finalists grow their solutions by unlocking new routes to market, finance and major partnerships. Leading global design agency IDEO crafted the Fellowship to ensure all fifteen Finalists are aided to maximise their impact through ambitious collaborations with The Earthshot Prize Global Alliance of 45 businesses, NGOs and philanthropists.

Contact:

For Media Inquiries regarding Finalists or The Earthshot Prize, please contact earthshotprize2022@fgsglobal.com

Creative businesses across the UK receive funding boost and government backing to spur future growth

- £950,000 sector-wide careers programme to help more young people from underrepresented backgrounds break into creative industries
- Seventeen of UK's leading start-up creative studios awarded grants of up to £25,000 to develop the next generation of video games

Creative businesses with the potential to become booming businesses in six English regions are to benefit from a new £17.5 million funding pot to help expand their operations, attract additional investment and create jobs.

It comes on the day a £950,000 careers programme for the sector is launched in England and some of the UK's brightest creative entrepreneurs are told they will be backed by the government to develop the next generation of global smash-hit video games.

The creative industries are one of the major UK economic success stories in recent years. They have grown at twice the rate of the wider economy since 2010 – generating approximately £115.9 billion for the economy and providing more than two million jobs.

Data from the Association for UK Interactive Entertainment (Ukie) estimates the value of the UK consumer games market reached a record £7.16 billion in 2021.

Today's plans will build on this stellar success and make sure the next generation of creative talent succeeds, companies continue to scale-up and

those that need support have access to it.

Creative Industries Minister Julia Lopez said:

From product design and video games to music and film, the creative industries are a stellar UK success story.

Today's plans will help get more creative businesses off the ground so they can spread jobs and wealth and help more people, including those from underrepresented backgrounds, break into these world-class sectors.

Create Growth Programme

Companies in six regions will receive support through the Create Growth Programme to help get themselves investment ready. The regions are Greater Manchester; the West of England and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly; Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire; Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire; Kent, Essex and East and West Sussex; and the North East of England.

Each of the six regions have been awarded £1.275 million in grant funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to develop a targeted programme of business support. Regions will also benefit from a number of investor building activities such as networking and pitching events to attract investment and exchange ideas.

Businesses across the six regions will also be able to apply to a new £7 million investment fund to fuel their expansion. Companies applying for finance will need to demonstrate their potential to grow rapidly and become sustainable through private investment. The investment fund and investor building activities will be delivered by the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK.

Creative Careers Programme

To develop the next generation of talent, the Government has chosen ScreenSkills, the screen industry's skills body, to lead the delivery of a £950,000 Creative Careers Programme. This programme, targeted in 53 priority areas across the country including Barking and Dagenham, Wolverhampton, Rotherham, Slough and Swindon, will help young people from underrepresented backgrounds break into the creative industries.

The programme will provide specialist guidance to 11 to 18-year-olds on careers and help pay for industry-led digital and in-person events, lesson plans, a dedicated careers website with careers information and resources, and training for careers advisors. This will help ensure more young people from a diverse range of backgrounds can take advantage of the fantastic careers opportunities in these sectors.

UK Games Fund

Also announced today are seventeen start-up video games studios which have been given grants of up to £25,000 to realise their ideas for innovative new projects as part of the UK Games Fund. The cash injection is for firms across the country with great ideas but lacking in development funding.

The fund, which was established in 2015, has received increased government funding of more than £8 million for 2022 to 2025. It aims to help high-potential companies raise new funding, spur economic growth and create new jobs.

Games spanning formats from virtual reality to mobile and themes from space exploration to eco-education, with developers based across the country – from Cardiff to Paisley and Brighton to Yorkshire – will benefit from the scheme's latest funding round.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Create Growth Programme

More information on the Create Growth Programme is available [here](#).

Full list of regional consortium partners that the Create Growth Programme will support:

Greater Manchester Combined Authority; Bolton; Bury; Manchester; Oldham; Rochdale; Tameside; Trafford; Salford; Stockport; Wigan; Leicester and Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership; Derby and Derbyshire County Council; Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership; West of England Combined Authority; North Somerset Council; Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership; New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership; Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority; Suffolk County Council; Norfolk County Council; Kent County Council; Medway Council; West Sussex County Council; Essex County Council; East Sussex County Council; Brighton and Hove City Council; North of Tyne Combined Authority; Newcastle City Council; Northumberland County Council; North Tyneside Council; South Tyneside Council; Gateshead Council, Sunderland City Council; Durham County Council, Rutland; Thurrock Council; Southend on Sea Borough Council; South East Local Enterprise Partnership..

Creative Careers Programme

More information on the Creative Careers Programme is available [here](#).

Full list of regions the Creative Careers Programme will specifically target:

Barking and Dagenham, Ashfield, Barnsley, Basildon, Gloucester, Brent, Bolsover, Barrow in Furness, Crawley, Gosport, Croydon, Boston, Blackburn with Darwen, Dover, Isle of Wight, Enfield, Chesterfield, Blackpool, Fenland,

Isles of Scilly, Newham, Dudley, Copeland, Great Yarmouth, New Forest, East Lindsey, County Durham, Luton, North Devon, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Kirklees, Medway, North Somerset, North East Derbyshire, Knowsley, Peterborough, Portsmouth, Mansfield, North East Lincolnshire, Slough, Rushmoor, Sandwell, Rochdale, Tendring, South Somerset, Stoke on Trent, Rotherham, Swindon, Walsall, Selby, Wolverhampton, South Tyneside, Tees Valley Combined Authority and Wigan.

Full list of industry delivery partners for the Creative Careers Programme:

The Academy of International Extended Reality, Blue Zoo Productions Ltd, The Careers and Enterprise Company, Cockpit Arts, The Crafts Council, Creative & Cultural Skills, Creative Assembly, Creative UK, Design Business Association, ERIC, Framestore Ltd, Get Into Theatre, Heritage Crafts Association, The Institute for Practitioners in Advertising, The Publishers Association, The National Archives, One Dance UK, ScreenSkills, UK Fashion and Textiles Association, UK Music, UK Theatre/Society of London Theatre.

UK Games Fund

More information on the UK Games Fund is available [here](#).

Start-up studios supported through this round of the UK Games Fund:

- The VR Hive, in Paisley, will use the grant to develop its virtual reality team-building game Planet Pollinate. The game will see players collaborate in an arctic-like environment to solve puzzles and practice skills associated with teamwork.
- Cardiff-based developer Good Gate Media is using the funding to develop its game True Crime: A Liar's Game, in which players control the filmmaker Jack who is investigating a case of wrongful conviction.
- Yorkshire gaming company Tea Stained Games will use its grant to develop Cabbie!, which enables players to test their driving skills in an alien world where companies are polluting the planet with toxic materials.
- Norwich-based Fairer Games will develop Brewess, a narrative puzzle game which tasks players with running a successful alehouse in early modern East Anglia.
- Humble Grove, in Yorkshire, will develop Twilight Array, a game that sees scavengers explore an abandoned spaceship.
- Folkestone's Spire Games will develop Mechs Vs Robots, a mobile-first game which sees players battle robots and aliens.
- Balloon Studios, in Devon, will develop the plant-themed puzzle game Botany Manor.
- Greater Manchester's Phigames will develop a game which will see players explore hostile interplanetary systems.
- Macabre Museum, an adventure horror game set in a museum, will be developed by Brighton-based studio Different Monster.
- London-based The Line Animation will develop a driving game that will see players embark on a perilous road trip.
- Essex-based Semaepus will make Bridgebuilder, a tool to find new ways for game developers to communicate and collaborate.
- Prism Palace in Surrey will develop The Dune Sea, a science fiction

adventure game set within a vast desert planet.

- Nullpointer in Brighton will develop *The Darkness Will Devour Us*, a strategy game that sees players defend the last city on earth.
- Bristol's *Two Headed Alien* will develop *Project Diagnosis*, a sci-fi investigation game about caring for victims of alien abduction.
- Included Games in Brighton will develop *Queens of Fortune*, a multiplayer party game that sees players create their own avatars and take part in a treasure hunt.
- London-based *Epoch Media Studios* will make *Pension\$*, a game centred on a cash-strapped university professor who gets drawn into a murky criminal world.
- *Crooks Peak* in Wiltshire will develop *By Grit Alone*, a virtual reality shooter game.

Additional quotes:

Create Growth Programme:

Esra Kasapoglu, Director of AI and Data Economy, Innovate UK said:

Creative industries offer an exceptional opportunity for innovation and can boost productivity and sustainable growth. The UK is a global leader in the creative industries and UK's creative businesses offer their goods and services to the world.

At Innovate UK, we have a passion to grow the UK's creative businesses and foster collaborative relationships across other sectors and regions to resolve challenges for digital innovation and creative change.

In collaboration with DCMS, we will continue to inspire creative businesses and help them unleash creative innovation to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth.

Mike Hill, Kent County Council's Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, said:

We are delighted that our bid for £1.275m from the DCMS Create Growth Programme has been successful.

The programme offers us the opportunity to build on previous programmes, such as South East Creatives. It will help provide infrastructure and new routes to investment to support the diversity of the area's creative businesses.

James Copson, founder of Anattic, a creative production agency based in Manchester, said:

The Creative Growth pilot helped Anattic and our team to learn new skills and understand scale and development on a deeper level. We have been able to put many of the lessons learnt during the various workshops, support and advice sessions into practice and have grown the business considerably since joining the programme. Our business has since developed from a UK, localised production company to an international creative production agency with plans in place to move into Asian markets, specifically Japan. We are excited about the potential this programme has to make a real impact on creative businesses.

Mark Duddridge, Chair of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership, said:

This award will bring targeted support and investment into our high growth potential creative industries and I'm delighted the region's bid has been successful. By bringing together the distinct industry landscapes of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and the West of England, we can share best practice and drive growth in this strategically important sector.

Professor Katie Normington, Vice-Chancellor, De Montfort University, Leicester said:

As a university with a long and proud history of teaching and research in the creative sector, we are passionate about the opportunity that this Create Growth programme presents to support creatives in the region to scale up and take that next step to grow their business.

We were delighted to be able to support the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership in shaping this successful application and believe it has real potential to transform opportunities for the thousands of people who work in the creative sector in Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire.

North of Tyne Combined Authority Cabinet Member for Culture, Creative and Rural and Leader of Northumberland County Council, Cllr Sanderson said:

We have established a supportive and attractive environment for creative and cultural businesses and people – supporting them to locate, start-up, grow, and flourish here in the North East. I am delighted that in collaboration with our partners across the region we have shown that there is real potential for our creative businesses and freelancers. After a difficult time for the sector over the last couple of years, it is great that our vision for the sector is recognised and strengthened.

Robin Milton, founder of Fairer Game, based in Norwich, said:

It is fantastic to see this level of commitment to supporting early-stage creative businesses in this region from DCMS. I founded my games business in Norfolk because I firmly believe in the innovation, the collaboration, and the culture of this area. The Create Growth Programme will help in providing opportunities, retaining talent and accessing finance for creative businesses in this area and I look forward to seeing the positive ripple effects of this initiative.

Sir Peter Balzalgette, Industry Chair of the Creative Industries Council said:

Our world leading creative industries have the power to generate great jobs and economic growth, now and in the future. Today's announcement will enable burgeoning businesses in these areas to secure the investment they need to innovate, export and grow, and help more young people from all backgrounds make informed choices about their future creative careers. It will unlock opportunities for more communities and creative talent across the country.

Creative Careers Programme:

Seetha Kumar, CEO at ScreenSkills on behalf of the Creative Careers Programme partners said:

It is difficult to contemplate a career you don't even know about which is why we are delighted to be working with so many innovative partners to ensure we can secure a strong and inclusive workforce that meets the demands of our brilliant, fast-paced sectors. I personally can't wait to see the return of Discover! Creative Careers week which will open the doors of hundreds of organisations to thousands of students who have the least access to careers in the creative industries, giving them hands-on insight into roles they didn't know existed.

UK Games Fund:

Dr Jo Twist OBE, CEO of games and interactive entertainment trade association Ukie, said:

The UK Games Fund has played an invaluable role in growing our national sector and ensuring that the UK remains one of the best places in the world to make video games.

Its ongoing support for start up games businesses across the country has led to both the creation of captivating video games and real value for the economy in terms of jobs, investment and tax revenues.

We're pleased that the Government has delivered additional support for our thriving sector and look forward to seeing the great games that emerge from this support in the coming years.

Dr Richard Wilson OBE, CEO of games trade body TIGA, said:

Access to finance is a challenge for many small development studios. The UK Games Fund is a vital intervention which enables start-ups and small studios to develop game prototypes, develop commercial skills and embark upon the path to growth and success. TIGA strongly supports the UKGF. We look forward to seeing how the latest beneficiaries build their businesses and scale-up their studios.

Tony Gowland, Ant Workshop, said:

The UK Games Fund's support during the early stages of Dungeon Golf was extremely useful in enabling us to take that initial idea and create a playable prototype. As a funded company, the UK Games Fund has been transformative for Ant Workshop and our projects – I would thoroughly recommend checking it out and considering applying if you are eligible.