

[Press release: 3 major UK construction suppliers in provisional cartel finding](#)

The CMA today announced it has provisionally found that the UK's 3 principal suppliers of rolled lead broke competition law.

[News story: UK backs British aid organisations in the event of no deal](#)

Last August the Department for International Development [committed to funding](#) any new programme led by a UK aid organisation funded from the EU's humanitarian and civil protection agency (ECHO) in a no deal scenario.

The European Commission currently requires UK aid organisations to prove when they apply that they are able to fund the delivery of humanitarian contracts should there be a no deal scenario. The vast majority of organisations are unable to make such a financial commitment up front, and so were being discouraged from applying.

Ms Mordaunt has now promised to extend this pledge to cover any development funding implemented by UK NGOs which the EU would stop in a no deal scenario.

This includes contracts and grants awarded prior to 23 August. In addition, we will be extending the assurance to ECHO contracts signed prior to this date. This assurance will now apply to programmes bid for prior to 12 April.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

It is deeply disappointing that the EU continues to discriminate against world-class humanitarian and development organisations because they are British.

We will guarantee funding to these life-saving organisations so they can continue their vital work in the event of no deal.

Ms Mordaunt has written to UK aid organisations to confirm her funding commitment.

[Penny Mordaunt's Written Statement to Parliament on the extension of the financial assurance.](#)

News story: Next step in photonic technologies: apply for funding

Photonic technologies including lasers and fibre-optics contribute [almost £13 billion to the UK economy](#). These technologies, which generate and harness light, can currently be found in smartphones displays and driverless cars.

Light-based technologies also account for [7% of all UK manufacturing output](#). This means that the UK is currently among the top 10 countries for global market share of photonics components. However, ensuring the UK's continued success will require continued improvement on products and processes.

A share of £2 million is available for international partnerships developing novel industrial photonic technologies. The funding is available through the EUREKA Network in Photonics, a joint initiative between Innovate UK and the [Photonics21 Mirror Group](#).

Competition information

The competition is focused on significantly improving products and processes surrounding photonic technologies.

These include but are not limited to:

- laser machining
- additive manufacturing
- selective laser sintering
- photonic curing
- photo, stereo or laser-based lithography
- wave imaging and light detection and ranging (LIDAR)

Industry sectors in this competition's scope include but are not limited to:

- materials
- electronic and computer components
- aviation or aerospace
- manufacturing
- electro-mechanical engineering

This is a collaborative research and development competition. Projects must include at least 1 partner from the participating countries of the EUREKA Network in Photonics. These are:

- Austria
- France
- Germany
- Israel

- Poland
- Switzerland

Projects can also partner with other UK-based businesses and research organisations of any size.

Competition information

- the competition is open and the deadline for registration is at midday on 15 July 2019
- organisations of any size can apply
- total eligible project costs are expected to be between £640,000 and £1.7 million, which includes costs from all partners in the UK and other countries

Briefing events will be held in:

[News story: Protection from tax hikes extended for military personnel in Scotland](#)

Thousands of troops who could have been adversely affected by the Scottish Government's tax rises will continue to be protected in the next financial year.

Last year the Defence Secretary announced that to counter tax hikes by the Scottish Government, the MOD would provide financial mitigation to ensure that over 8000 personnel would not be negatively affected.

The move came after concerns that income tax changes could have resulted in Scotland becoming a less attractive place for military personnel to be posted. The renewed protection, to cover financial year 2019/20, will protect nearly two thirds of all armed forces personnel liable for Scottish Income Tax. It will also help with recruitment and retention, particularly as many of those affected are personnel with specialist skills, such as aircraft and submarine engineers.

The last Scottish Government budget in December 2018 confirmed further divergence between Scottish and UK tax rates and as a result the financial compensation cap for Armed Forces personnel liable for Scottish tax has risen from £1500 to £2200.

The plans will protect the personnel who continue to be negatively affected by the income tax hikes. Personnel will be compensated with an annual payment to make sure that all troops, regardless of where they are deployed or where

their families are based, will receive similar take-home pay.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our Armed Forces are deployed where they are most needed and so it is wrong that personnel are penalised or left hundreds of pounds out of pocket because of decisions taken by the Scottish Government.

As a result of this decision, I am extending the financial mitigation package for serving personnel in Scotland for another tax year. This demonstrates our commitment to treating all personnel both equally and fairly, wherever they serve.

The financial mitigation measures will:

- Be payable to all regular personnel who pay Scottish Income Tax, regardless of where in the world they are serving. Mitigation of between £12 and £2,200 will be paid, with payments grossed up to take account of income tax and national insurance applied when they are made.
- Cover personnel for tax year 2019/20, with a single payment made retrospectively.

The MOD will continue to review the situation and make decisions each tax year as to whether the difference between Scottish tax and tax elsewhere in the UK is sufficient to warrant financial mitigation. The annual cost to the MOD for Tax Year 2019/20 is expected to be £6 million.

Scotland Secretary David Mundell said:

Our servicemen and women make a huge contribution to Scottish communities and the economy and it is unfair for them to be hit in the pocket by the Scottish Government's decision to make Scotland the highest taxed part of the UK. I welcome the Defence Secretary's confirmation that the UK Government will continue to protect our military personnel from this Scottish Government imposed penalty.

Scotland plays an important role in UK Defence supporting over 10,000 industry jobs and is renowned for building the world's finest warships including the UK's new aircraft carriers and the Royal Navy's state-of-art Type-26 frigates.

Scotland also benefits from £1.6 billion of defence investment in local industry and an average of £290 expenditure per person each year. Scotland is also home to some of the most important national defence capabilities including HM Naval Base Clyde, home to Britain's nuclear deterrent and

hunter-killer submarines, and RAF Lossiemouth, which defends the UK's airspace with its three Typhoon combat aircraft squadrons and 51st Infantry Brigade.

News story: Dedicated support centres for complex cases

The Service and Support Centres (SSC) will provide a free service for those who may be in a position of vulnerability or who may have complex circumstances and would therefore benefit from an enhanced service.

Experienced UKVI staff will provide a face to face service and help people throughout their application. The hands-on service will help make sure the right information and evidence is captured, so that individuals apply under the route most appropriate for their circumstances.

The SSCs will be in Belfast, Cardiff, Croydon, Glasgow, Liverpool, Sheffield and Solihull.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

I want an immigration system which is flexible and a key part of that is to make sure we provide enhanced support to those who need it.

These new centres will have experienced staff on hand to help guide people through the process so that they can get any support they may need, but importantly to help make sure they provide the right information first time.

The hands-on support at the new centres will help reduce the number of instances where further information is requested, as staff will help people understand what information and evidence they need to provide.

People with exceptional circumstances, such as serious medical issues or destitution, may also qualify for travel assistance or mobile services.

The online application will intuitively lead the person through the process making it clear what they need to do, what supporting evidence they will need and where they will need to go to complete their application.

The service will also be open to a range of people, including those who are applying based on family or private life or if they have been granted a fee waiver.