

News story: Gloucestershire robots sent to teach kids in the US and Australia

Ohbot, a Gloucestershire company that makes robots for the education sector, has secured contracts in the US, Australia, and Canada with support from the Department for International Trade (DIT).

The business recently signed a contract with the Microsoft Store in the US after exhibiting at Bett, a global education training and technology show in London.

The deal will see Ohbots supplied to all 80 Microsoft stores across the US and Canada to help children at its YouthSpark summer camps learn technical skills. The robots are used to help kids have fun while learning how to code. The business also secured its first deal with an Australian distributor to supply robots to schools across the country with additional orders expected over the next year.

The Stroud-based business, founded by Dan Warner and Mat Walker in 2014, designs and manufactures affordable robots to teach children digital skills such as coding.

The Ohbot robot has formed an integral part of digital skills training in schools. (c) Ohbot

Last year, the business began working with DIT to help increase its exports and expand its international presence. DIT identified key target markets where demand for educational technology was growing and introduced the business to potential buyers. It also put the firm in touch with an export manager who offered on-the-ground support and advice about attending South by Southwest (SXSW), a series of film and technology festivals and conferences, in Texas earlier this year.

DIT has also provided financial support to help Ohbot exhibit at global shows and meet with Microsoft representatives from the US.

To cope with the increase in demand, Ohbot plans to hire 5 new members of staff to work at its manufacturing site at Halliday Mill, as well as brand and marketing specialists.

Mat Walker, co-founder at Ohbot, said:

We're a relatively new company and started Ohbot in 2014 using Crowdfunder and Kickstarter sites. We knew there was demand in the UK for technology that could teach children about coding and robots, but initially didn't have the contacts or the know-how to showcase our robots internationally.

Working with DIT was key to our international success. The team of advisers introduced us to buyers and distributors, which means that children across the globe will be able to learn about technology by using our products.

For businesses that are considering launching their products internationally, I would say don't hesitate. Working with DIT has had a huge impact on our business. If we can succeed on the global stage, so can other South West businesses.

Paul Shand, DIT's Head of South West said:

The UK is leading the way in educational technology and is home to more than a quarter of Europe's edtech businesses. By 2020, the global market for the sector is expected to total £129 billion and it's great to see local, startup businesses like Ohbot tapping into this demand and creating new jobs as a result.

Not only does DIT have a dedicated team of International Trade Advisers across the South West to support ambitious and innovative businesses like Ohbot looking to access new markets and increase exports, but we also have a team of experienced sector specialists and an overseas network in 108 countries. We can offer a range of guidance and support, including international market research and exporting workshops, as well as enabling contact with buyers and distributors in new markets.

For more information or to access online support, including the find a buyer, and export readiness tools, visit great.gov.uk.

Notice: B6 7UR, Timet UK Limited: environmental permit issued

The Environment Agency publish permits that they issue under the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED).

This decision includes the permit decision document:

- Operator name: Timet UK Limited
- Installation name: Timet UK Limited
- Permit number: EPR/BM5020IC/V004

Notice: DL7 0PF, Daniel Blenkiron trading as Blenkiron Farming Company: environmental permit issued

The Environment Agency publish permits that they issue under the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED).

This decision includes the notice of variation and decision document for:

- Operator name: Daniel Blenkiron trading as Blenkiron Farming Company
- Installation name: Lark Hall Farm
- Permit number: EPR/CP3937CD/V003

News story: Reducing the use of animals in research: apply for funding

The [National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research](#) (NC3Rs) and its sponsors have £2 million to invest in a series of challenges to reduce the use of animals in experiments.

NC3Rs is an independent scientific organisation that supports UK scientists in finding ways to replace, reduce or refine the use of animals in research.

Its CRACK IT programme invites small and medium-sized businesses and researchers to find solutions to specific challenges.

These 3 challenges are co-funded by the [Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council](#), with contributions in kind by [Galvani Bioelectronics](#), [GSK](#), [MRC Harwell Institute](#) and [Sanofi Pasteur EU](#).

This funding competition is being delivered by Innovate UK through SBRI (the Small Business Research Initiative).

2018 CRACK IT challenges

Single or 2 phases

The challenges are run in either a single phase or 2 phases.

Single-phase challenges involve less research and mainly focus on the

validation of new technologies.

Two-phase challenges require significant funding and can include research, development and validation of new technologies.

ImmuLiver

The aim of this 2-phase challenge is to develop an in vitro model of the human liver for assessment of yellow fever vaccine.

Current yellow fever vaccines are assessed in macaques. Projects should overcome the lack of 'immune competency' in existing in vitro models.

There is up to £100,000 to fund projects lasting up to 6 months in phase 1. Up to £1 million is available in phase 2 to support projects lasting up to 3 years.

RaTS

One of the biggest challenges facing scientists is the imaging of affected joints in rheumatoid arthritis. Joint pain and inflammation in animal models can only be monitored indirectly by detecting the response to external stimuli.

The aim of this 2-phase challenge is to develop a handheld imaging device to monitor the progression of rheumatoid arthritis in conscious rodents.

There is up to £100,000 to fund projects lasting up to 6 months in phase 1. Up to £750,000 is available in phase 2 to support projects lasting up to 3 years.

Moshers

This single-phase challenge aims to develop an approach or device that will accurately measure individual food intake in mice housed in groups of 3 to 5.

A measurement of food intake is an indicator of general welfare and of recovery from surgery. It is also an important measurement when carrying out studies.

Accurate measurement of feeding patterns is technically challenging, particularly when mice are housed in social groups.

Up to £100,000 is available for projects lasting up to 1 year.

Competition information

- the 3 challenges open for applications on 10 September 2018
- the deadline for ImmuLiver and RaTS is at midday on 7 November 2018
- the deadline for Moshers is at midday on 14 November 2018
- any organisation that can demonstrate a route to market for its idea can apply

- successful projects will attract 100% funded development contracts
-

Statement to Parliament: Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme

Madam Deputy Speaker, today gives us a new start.

Westminster has been rocked by allegations of bullying and harassment since last November, but today we can demonstrate our determination to put our house in order – and ensure that in the future, everyone will be treated with dignity and respect.

This debate and vote come as a result of the tireless work and dedication of the Programme Team who have driven the implementation of the Working Group's proposals.

The Programme Team were overseen by a cross-party steering group made up of staff representatives and members of both Houses. To everyone who has been involved with this process and who have supported and provided advice, I am extremely grateful.

And most importantly, we probably wouldn't be having this debate at all if it wasn't for the bravery and spirit of those women and men who have chosen to speak out about their personal experiences. We thank them for taking that step on behalf of everyone who has been treated wrongly.

The motion on the Order Paper today asks the House to endorse specific changes that were identified in the Working Group's report, which was published and agreed by the House in February. The principles of that report will today become reality.

Today's motion will approve the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report, and in doing so it will:

- Ask the House to endorse a new Behaviour Code that makes it clear to all of us who come here – whether an MP, a member of staff, a Peer, contractor or visitor – the standard expected of everyone in Parliament
- Ask the House to eliminate the threat of exposure which prevents many from coming forward, by ensuring that all investigations are managed confidentially
- Provide the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (PCS) with a broader set of powers, and makes changes to the Committee on Standards, including to the voting role of lay members
- Propose that a further independent inquiry will be established in similar terms to the Dame Laura Cox inquiry, to hear historic allegations about Members, peers and their staff

- Make provision for a full review of these arrangements at six and 18 months

In addition to the measures in today's motion, the Steering Group has established:

- Two independent helplines, one to deal with bullying and one to deal with sexual misconduct
- Independent HR advice for staff
- An aspiration to improve the general culture of Parliament; including through a new programme of training

I would like Members, staff and the public to rest assured that this Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy (ICGP) puts the complainant at the heart of the process, whilst also upholding the principles of 'innocent until proven guilty'.

The ICGP will be fair, transparent, and I believe, will win the confidence of everyone.

What Have We Done?

Today, Madam Deputy Speaker following an intensive period of implementation, is the final Parliamentary hurdle to getting this much-needed new scheme up and running. This is the first step, not the final step, towards the culture change we all want to see.

That's why we have built in a 6 and an 18-month review of the scheme to ensure it achieves exactly what we set out to do.

Importantly, the 6-month review will take careful account of the findings of the independent inquiry by Dame Laura Cox QC, and the further independent inquiry we are establishing today.

So, turning to the key elements of today's motion.

Behaviour Code

First, the new behaviour code will apply to everyone on the Parliamentary estate.

It has been drawn up following extensive consultation with Trade Unions, staff associations and the public, who were asked for their views on what behavioural expectations we should have of those working for and within Parliament.

It seeks to ensure that:

- Everyone in Parliament is respected and valued;
- We take a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct;
- Unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with seriously, and with effective sanctions.

Changes to the Commissioner for Standards and Standards Committee

Today's motion will also make changes to Standing Orders for the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, and to the Committee on Standards on confidential investigations.

Firstly, we are proposing that the Commissioners of both Houses keep their investigations entirely confidential, until such time as there is a finding.

This is crucial if individuals are to place their trust in the new system. There is clearly a balance to be struck between the public interest in transparency, and putting the complainant at the heart of the process by protecting their identity – that is absolutely vital. So in deciding to publish any finding, the Parliamentary Commissioner on Standards will put the complainant's wishes at the heart of the decision.

In thanking the Rt Hon. Gentleman for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin John Barron MP) for the extremely thoughtful and collaborative way he and his committee have come to today's position – I must point out to Members that we have had to respectfully disagree on one issue, and that confidentiality should also be observed in cases prior to the introduction of non-ICGP cases.

I would be the last person to want to avoid transparency, but I do think it's vital that we achieve consistency. The amendment by the Standards Committee would effectively mean that there was one process for ICGP cases and a different one for non-ICGP. As I am sure Members will appreciate, such a difference in the process will be lost on those who would observe it and will inevitably lead to confusion. Right from the beginning, this scheme has sought to put the complainant at the heart of the process and all the evidence we have taken demonstrates that confidentiality is a key factor that will encourage victims to come forward.

I can't emphasise this enough – if we don't protect the confidentiality of victims, then the evidence shows that they will not come forward. So, if we are serious about changing the culture in this place, confidentiality and consistency are vital elements.

So again, in thanking the Rt Hon. Gentleman for his careful consideration, I must urge members to vote against his amendment.

This motion will also significantly extend the scope of the independent Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to consider complaints arising from the Scheme. The Commissioner will be given access to a wider range of sanctions, enabling her to deal more effectively with many cases through apologies, training, behaviour agreements, and so on; as well as ensuring independent oversight of investigations.

The motion also sets out changes to the procedures of the Standards Committee, who will receive both appeals and the most serious cases for their consideration. Their voting system will be changed at their request so that all members, including all lay members, will have a vote.

How Will the New System Work?

Should the House accept these changes, detailed guidance will be available online. But I do want to briefly outline how the new scheme will work.

For anyone with a complaint the first step is to contact a confidential helpline, where their issue can be considered and triaged.

Where individuals decide to pursue a formal complaint, they will be supported to access one of two independent services – one dealing with bullying and harassment and a separate one to deal with sexual misconduct.

Should a complaint have criminal implications, the Steering Group has agreed to establish an Information Sharing Protocol with the Metropolitan Police to make them aware, in the interests of safeguarding and ensuring the Scheme does not prejudice a criminal investigation, when such a complaint has been made. The protocol will maintain the confidentiality of complainants, who will decide for themselves whether or not to take their complaint to the police.

For each complaint the telephone helpline and investigatory service will seek mediation and informal resolutions, wherever these are possible or appropriate. Where that is not the case, an independent investigation will be opened.

Complainants of sexual harassment or assault will have access to an Independent Sexual Misconduct Advisory Service – which is a specialist service that can provide confidential, independent, specialist and trained support in relation to sexual misconduct.

In the case of complaints against Members of Parliament, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards will oversee the independent investigation and she will apply sanctions as appropriate, or in more serious cases she will refer it to the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee can, of course, apply sanctions right up to a lengthy suspension triggering The Recall of MPs Act 2015.

Following a decision on any case, there is an opportunity for appeal.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when the Working Group report was published, there were two outstanding issues that I am pleased to be able to provide clarity on today.

Firstly, when the Working Group started taking evidence last November, we were advised that House staff had access to the Respect policy, which was considered to be entirely adequate for their needs.

Since then it has come to light that there have been difficulties with the Respect policy, and so the Steering Group has been clear about its desire to give all staff access to the new ICGP Scheme.

I am pleased that the House Commission has now agreed that staff of the House of Commons and the Parliamentary Digital Service should be able to access the

ICGP from day one.

Secondly, whilst anyone can call the new helplines with a complaint, investigations under the new scheme can only go back as far as the beginning of this Parliament.

The Steering Group are, however, determined that we should be able to help all of those with complaints no matter how long ago they occurred.

Today's motion will therefore also establish an independent 6-month long inquiry into historical allegations, using similar terms of reference to the Dame Laura Cox inquiry. The findings of both inquiries will be taken into careful account when we undertake the review of the ICGP after six months of operation.

Conclusion

I want to conclude by making clear that this is the beginning, not the end of our efforts to change the culture of Parliament.

With our new behaviour code, complaints scheme, and sanctions – this is an excellent step in the right direction.

Our ultimate ambition is for a culture where people can work and visit Parliament, and take part in our democracy, free from unacceptable behaviour, free from bullying or harassment, and where individuals are free to thrive and make a difference.

This is a once in a generation opportunity for Parliament. We want to be a role model for legislatures around the world, in our determination to tackle our challenges head-on.

Many millions across the world look to Westminster as a beacon for democracy and freedom and I hope today will be seen as Parliament leading by example in our determination to treat everyone with dignity and respect.

I commend this motion to the House.