

News story: Availability of ESFA services: 20 October to 22 October 2018

Following the planned maintenance over the weekend we can confirm that the following services are now back online:

- Data Collections Service (the Hub)
- Manage your education and skills funding (previously known as, Skills Funding Service)
- Learning Records Service
- Apprenticeship Service
- National Careers Service

We have asked providers to submit their 2017 to 2018 final funding claims via the Data Collections Service by Monday 29 October. This deadline remains in place.

Press release: Life-changing tech industries and fabulous foods of Somerset are key to the UK economy, says Liz Truss

Ahead of the Chancellor's Budget on 29 October, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Liz Truss, is visiting technology and agriculture businesses in Somerset.

Liz Truss has praised the output of Somerset businesses and revealed the south west is on pace for a record breaking year of exports.

Latest figures show that Somerset has already exported £10.5 billion worth of goods in the first half of 2018, up on the same period last year.

And since 2010 there are 115,000 more businesses in the south west, all helping to ensure the region has the lowest unemployment rate of any region in the UK.

Liz Truss said:

The diversity of businesses across Somerset is striking and it underlines the importance of this vibrant region.

From life-changing apps that help children learn maths, to world class food and drink, Somerset is a region that benefits Britons every day.

And it's also showcasing the best of Britain around the world too.

Exports from this area were worth more than £20 billion in 2017, up by 10 per cent on 2016, and we are supporting the ambitions of business to trade more in the future.

Since 2010 taxpayers in Somerset have benefitted from income tax changes, saving the typical taxpayer more than £1,000 a year, and the government's balanced economic approach means local hospitals in Somerset are receiving nearly £90 million to transform their buildings and services, and £10.5 million to improve mental health services for children and teenagers in North Somerset and North East Somerset.

And with fuel duty frozen for the ninth year in a row it means motorists will be able to continue to keep more of what they earn.

Motorists and businesses also benefit from road investment, including upgrades to the M49 near Bristol which will ease congestion and help support economic growth in the south west.

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Press release: Call for new green innovations to tackle climate change

- Britain's brightest brains will be invited to launch projects – from digital sensors to monitor the environment, to new software to help us adapt to low carbon technologies
- funding announced by Business Secretary Greg Clark as part of Industrial Strategy comes during the first ever Green GB Week, a nationwide week of action on climate change

Britain's best innovators and researchers will be invited to pitch their ideas to help tackle the effects of climate change on towns, cities and the countryside as part of modern Industrial Strategy.

Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark today (19 October) announced 4 new research programmes to boost the UK's resilience to climate change, develop digital environments, promote clean air and investigate how to use our land to boost health outcomes.

The £60 million funding pot was announced during the first ever [Green GB Week](#) – a government-led week of campaigning to encourage businesses, communities, funders and academics to renew their efforts to confront the global challenge of climate change.

The government has put clean growth at the heart of its modern [Industrial Strategy](#), setting out ambitions to reduce carbon emissions while supporting a thriving green economy. Earlier this week the UK became one of the first major industrial economies to ask climate change experts for advice on setting a target for achieving [net zero greenhouse gas emissions](#) from across the economy.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

Companies are capitalising on the UK's world leading position in the greener economy as we transition to a greener, cleaner economy and is one of the greatest industrial opportunities of our time.

The UK is a world leader in tackling climate change, cutting our emissions more than 40% since 1990 while growing our economy. When you combine Britain's leadership, innovation and determination it is an unbeatable combination – exactly what our Industrial Strategy and Green GB Week are supporting and encouraging.

UK Research and Innovation Chief Executive, Professor Sir Mark Walport, said:

The recent IPCC report is a timely reminder of the challenges we face in tackling climate change. Storm Callum has highlighted the impact that extreme weather events can have on our communities.

It is vital that the evidence generated by research is used effectively to navigate and mitigate the effects of climate change, and new technologies are developed to support a move to a low carbon economy.

The Strategic Priorities Fund is important in supporting UKRI's mission, allowing us to bring collective expertise from a wide range of disciplines and sectors to bear on addressing important matters affecting all of society.

The programmes, administered by UKRI, will bring together a broad range of research disciplines, ranging from mathematics and biology to climate science and technology development to:

- produce better data on climate risks to the UK
- build a digital picture of our natural environment for greater monitoring and analysis of the impact of climate change
- cut air pollution and protect vulnerable groups from its effects
- use our land better, for the benefit of the environment and communities
- developing ways for the UK to adapt to climate change

Chief Scientist of the Met Office, Professor Stephen Belcher, said:

These programmes will allow the Met Office and our partners to make real progress in two areas of significant environmental impact: air pollution and climate change.

Working together with other world-leading scientists from the UK's academic community, we will be able to deliver tools and services which will benefit the lives and livelihoods of people across the UK.

Competitions for the programmes will open in the coming weeks. Researchers and innovators can visit the [UKRI website](#) for updates.

The funding comes as part of the Strategic Priorities Fund, delivered by UKRI to drive an increase in high quality multi- and interdisciplinary research and innovation. It will ensure that UKRI's investment links up effectively with government research priorities and opportunities. Further programmes will be announced in the coming months.

1. The 4 research programmes are:

UK Climate Resilience

- NERC and the Met Office with EPSRC, ESRC, DEFRA, The CCC Adaptation Sub-Committee
- funding: £18.7 million

The programme will harness multidisciplinary expertise to deliver robust climate risk and solutions research, which ensures the UK is resilient to climate variability and change, and powerfully positioned to exploit the opportunities of adaptation and green growth. Coming together with policymakers and industry, the programme will bring impacts that benefit the UK economy and safeguard the public.

Clean Air: Analysis and Solutions

- NERC and the Met Office with EPSRC, ESRC, Innovate UK, MRC, NPL, DEFRA, DHSC, DfT
- funding: £19.6 million

Air pollution is responsible for up to 40,000 early deaths and a cost of up to £20 billion to health services and businesses every year. This programme will develop solutions to air pollution to help policymakers and businesses

protect health and work towards a cleaner economy. The programme will predict future air quality challenges, identify the most vulnerable groups in society, improve new technologies and policies for reducing air pollution, and create a system for providing robust consistent advice to decision makers.

Constructing a Digital Environment

- NERC with EPSRC, Innovate UK, DEFRA, Cabinet Office
- funding: £10.4 million

This programme will apply the latest technologies to environmental data from sensor networks across the UK, to deliver information in unprecedented detail. This will enable the construction of an integrated, digital picture of our natural environment, bringing benefit to policy-makers and other users by enabling better decision-making across a range of sectors, and increasing the opportunity to gain value from natural resources and mitigate environmental challenges.

Landscape Decisions

- NERC with AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, DEFRA
- funding: £10.5 million

This programme will develop a new understanding to help individuals, communities and country make the best choices regarding land use in the UK. Experts from the environment, biology, health, social, and arts and humanities will research together, supporting real world decisions with solutions for the informed use of land, and deliver improvements to our health, well-being and economy.

2. UK Research and Innovation works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities, and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish. We aim to maximise the contribution of each of our component parts, working individually and collectively. We work with our many partners to benefit everyone through knowledge, talent and ideas.

Operating across the whole of the UK with a combined budget of more than £6 billion, UK Research and Innovation brings together the [7 Research Councils, Innovate UK and a new organisation, Research England](#).

Press release: Secretary of State celebrates Welsh businesses as the

“great engines of growth”

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will use a major awards ceremony tonight (19 October) to hail the nation's business owners as “the great engines of growth for the future that we are building for Wales”.

Mr Cairns will address an audience of over 900 business leaders and entrepreneurs at the Wales Fast Growth 50 dinner at the Motorpoint Arena in Cardiff. The awards ceremony celebrates its 20th anniversary this year and recognises the achievements of the most dynamic companies in the country.

Since its inception, it is estimated that the businesses featured on the annual lists have created 40,000 jobs and generated an estimated £22 billion for the Welsh economy. Previous winners have included aircraft and spares services firm Aerfin from Caerphilly – also recognised in the Sunday Times Fast Track 100 list in 2017 – and Wrexham based Village Bakery.

Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns is expected to say:

Small businesses are the great engines of growth for the future that we are building for Wales.

Without you we wouldn't have some of Britain's biggest, best, most dynamic and most exciting companies proudly promoting the 'Made in Wales' stamp on their products and services all around the world.

Mr Cairns will tell the awards dinner that the UK Government is creating the right climate for businesses to grow through measures like the abolishing of the Severn tolls, the roll-out of high speed broadband and its ambition to deliver City and Growth Deals that cover every part of the country.

He will say:

There is no denying that combining dedicated, dynamic entrepreneurs with a pro-business, pro-growth government has really delivered results.

As we prepare to leave the EU, we must have the ambition to broaden our horizons, and take advantage of the opportunities that the new fast-growing markets around the globe present – and I want small businesses to lead the way in this.

So keep talking to us. Don't stop telling us what more you think we can do to help your businesses succeed. Because that is what every single minister in the UK Government wants and is focussed upon.

You can read about the background to the Wales Fast Growth Awards by visiting

