

Press release: Defence industry called to tackle enduring challenges

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin launched the Innovation Initiative's £6m Accelerator Enduring Challenge today, seeking to fast-track the innovative ideas which will keep the UK and its Armed Forces safe and secure.

Cutting-edge ideas like the life-saving device being developed by the University of Strathclyde to minimise blood loss in severely injured personnel; and 2iC's state-of-the-art work on secure data exchange between soldiers, vehicles, and bases and between coalition partners and allies. The MOD's investment in such innovative solutions demonstrates how the government is ensuring our Armed Forces have the most effective and innovative capability available.

The £6m Enduring Challenge is run by the MOD's new Defence and Security Accelerator and will fast-track the best ideas by funding their development, matching suppliers with expert Innovation Partners, and boosting supplier access to defence. The competition will run regularly, with up to 12 rounds a year.

Opening the competition in London, Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin, said:

The Accelerator Enduring Challenge is another important step in our Innovation Initiative's aim to transform defence. Backed by a rising defence budget and our £800m Innovation Fund, the Innovation Initiative is transforming Defence's creative culture.

We are challenging academics and businesses of all kinds to innovate, cooperate, and build mutual security and prosperity as the UK develops its ambitious Industrial Strategy to ensure an economy that works for everyone.

The launch event in London brought together researchers, entrepreneurs, innovation centres, small and medium-sized enterprises, the defence industry and international allies to build the collaborative approach which will deliver cutting-edge defence technology.

The Accelerator Enduring Challenge builds on the previous Centre for Defence Enterprise (CDE) Enduring competition by increasing funding and access to government. £6m will be available for the first year of the Enduring Challenge, which includes a second phase of new funding. The first phase will look at ideas in their early stages, while the second phase will nurture promising projects, as well as offering an alternative route for more advanced ideas and technologies.

Acting Head of the Accelerator, Rob Solly, said:

Through the Enduring Challenge we are hoping to reach out to a wide supply base, which can provide us with innovative ideas that challenge our ways of thinking and operating. We will then work with selected suppliers to support them in their development towards market delivery.

The first competition of the Accelerator Enduring Challenge is now open, with a deadline of 5 April 2017 to submit proposals. The competition will then operate on a regular basis with up to 12 rounds per year.

More information is available on the [Accelerator's website](#).

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New candidate for Greater Manchester Metro Mayor contest



26 January 2017

Following the tragic and untimely death of Deyika Nzeribe earlier this month, the Greater Manchester Green Parties have selected Will Patterson [1], chair of the Wigan & Leigh Green Party, to contest the Metro Mayor election in Greater Manchester. The vote, due to be held on 4 May, will give more than two million voters across the City Region the opportunity to vote for Green policies.

Will, a Wigan resident who has lived in Springfield for the last three years, joined the Green Party in 2014, and stood as the Green Party Parliamentary Candidate for Wigan in 2015. He has been an active campaigner for more public engagement in the devolution process.

He is a member of Frack Free Wigan, Leigh and Makerfield, and helped

establish Wigan People's Assembly Against Austerity. Last year, he supported Wigan Together, an event designed to promote and celebrate the diversity of the local community, and defend it against far right groups who were planning to march through the town. He was also delighted to sit on the organising committee of the inaugural Wigan Pride, which was held last August.

Will said: "These are tough circumstances to run in, but Deyika worked tirelessly to offer Greater Manchester the Green voice that the region desperately needs. I'm honoured to have been called upon to continue the amazing work that Deyika started, and together with party members from across the region, I'm looking forward to working for a fairer, more democratic and greener Greater Manchester.

Setting out his approach for the campaign, Will said: "This isn't the devolution I would have hoped for: it's been dropped on the people following closed-door back-room negotiations between Councils and the Government. If devolution is to work for the people of Greater Manchester, it needs to be owned by the people of Greater Manchester and deliver real solutions to the problems we face. We need a combined authority that will prioritise the real need for social and affordable homes; we need to do more to tackle the chaos of climate change that's hitting the region right now; and we need to open the doors of our new institutions so that the people of Greater Manchester can see and share in the decisions being taken in our name.

"Successive Westminster governments have left Greater Manchester behind – if we're to tackle their legacy of poverty and inequality, we need to do devolution differently. I'll empower not just our cities, but our citizens."

Notes:

1. Will Patterson

Will is 33. Over the last few years, he has been a contract worker in Manchester, working in IT Project Management until his last contract expired just before Christmas. And as a renter, Will is part of a generation that faces uncertain prospects with permanent jobs and affordable housing seemingly out of reach for many working people under 35. He feels his experiences dealing with the job market and the Government's new benefits system give him a good understanding of what life is like for many people across Greater Manchester.

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This report underlines just how rigged our economy & country actually is in favour of the wealthiest – Jeremy Corbyn

Jeremy Corbyn MP, leader of the Labour Party, commenting on a report by the Social Mobility Commission, said:

"This report underlines just how rigged our economy and country actually is in favour of the wealthiest and the privileged few. While the Conservatives look after the interests of their friends, they are closing down opportunity for the many by slashing funding for education.

"Labour is committed to a country that works for all, a real living wage of at least £10 an hour by 2020, investment in industry, infrastructure and public services and a national education service which equips the next generation with the skills our country needs to succeed, so that no one and no community is left behind."

Green Party: Poverty to blame for child health inequality



26 January 2017

The Green Party is deeply concerned child health in the UK is lagging behind that of most other European countries due to poverty rates [1]. Experts say little progress has been made to address the social factors behind health inequality since it was highlighted in a Government report in 2010 [2].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"It's appalling we're failing to give children the best start in life, even though Britain is one of the richest countries in the world. Children deserve to be happy and healthy, no matter where they are born or how much money

their parents make.

"We can't tackle a growing health gap between rich and poor children without looking at the way inequality is entrenched more widely. We're in an age of insecurity where life is getting worse for those who are struggling the most.

"The Government has a dismal record on child poverty, abolishing the child poverty unit [3] and scrapping child poverty targets [4]. Government cuts to public services have taken a toll and unless the Prime Minister prioritises tackling poverty, inequality will continue to soar, with a flow on effect on children's health and the NHS, which will struggle to cope with increased demand."

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jan/25/poverty-in-the-uk-jeopardising-childrens-health-warns-landmark-report>
2. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-38743574>
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/dec/20/fears-after-government-abolishes-civil-services-child-poverty-unit>
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jul/01/government-scrap-legal-requirements-child-poverty>

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Friends of Riverside Nature Park meeting



Last night, I attended the latest Friends of Riverside Nature Park committee meeting, held at the Mitchell Street Centre.

There was a useful update from environment officers from the council's Neighbourhood Services about proposed landscape improvements on Riverside

Drive and Avenue running from the nature park, eastwards along to the Riverside Pavilion east of the airport. At the east end of this area, there will also be parking improvements I highlighted yesterday.

The landscape proposals will be discussed a the council's Neighbourhood Services Committee in the coming weeks to obtain necessary approval.