

UK goes direct to EU businesses with new campaign

A new communications campaign has been launched to provide EU-based businesses with information they need to get ready to trade with the UK after 31 December 2020.

This communications effort complements the UK Government's domestic facing campaign, "The UK's New Start", which outlines some of the steps UK businesses need to take to prepare and take advantage of new opportunities outside the EU.

The new campaign will be delivered through a range of channels including high-impact print advertising in pan-European and country-specific titles, digital display advertising, paid search and paid social media promotion across LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram.

The UK will be leaving the EU's customs union and single market on 31 December 2020, regardless of the outcome of negotiations. The campaign, to "Keep Business Moving", will direct EU traders to a dedicated gov.uk page which provides information on what they need to do to continue trading smoothly with the UK at the end of the year. The page will be updated with further information over the coming weeks and months.

The launch of the campaign will also see joint letters from HM Ambassadors and HM Trade Commissioner for Europe Richard Burn to key industry groups and businesses in member states and EEA countries, to ensure everyone is aware of the campaign.

Greg Hands, Minister for Trade Policy, Department for International Trade said:

Our preparations for the end of the transition period are well underway and this campaign will support the UK's valuable trading partners in the EU to keep business moving at the end of the year.

As we have always been clear, we want to reach a Canada-style trade agreement with the EU and that remains our ambition. However, the transition period is ending on 31 December and this will bring changes regardless of the final terms of our trade relationship.

We are supporting businesses by launching this campaign to help them prepare over the coming weeks and months for changes in January, ensuring that businesses in both the UK and the EU can continue to operate smoothly in a new trading environment.

Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner for Europe, Richard Burn said:

The teams on the ground in our Embassies across Europe will work closely with our European partners, companies and business associations to ensure they have all the information they need to continue trading smoothly beyond the end of the transition period.

This new campaign will ensure EU businesses have the necessary practical information to succeed beyond 31 December 2020.

The campaign launch comes ahead of the eighth round of trade negotiations with the EU which begin on Tuesday.

Scottish universities awarded £20 million from UK Government

- University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow and Herriot-Watt University to benefit from £20m UK Government investment to transform NHS healthcare delivery
- Projects include AI X-ray scanner to diagnose cancer and osteoarthritis more effectively and clinical sensors to provide feedback on health and wellbeing in homes
- Funding is part of UK Government commitment to increase R&D public spending by £22 billion by 2024/25
- The £20m awarded to Scottish universities is part of a £32m UK wide announcement for healthcare projects announced by UK Government Science Minister, Amanda Solloway at London Tech week today

Debilitating diseases such as cancer and osteoarthritis could be identified and treated faster and more effectively, thanks to four new Scottish tech projects that aim to transform care and treatments in the NHS by 2050, helping to improve people's quality of life as they age.

InlightenUs, led by the University of Edinburgh, will receive £5.4 million to use a combination of artificial intelligence (AI) and infra-red lasers to produce fast, high resolution 3D medical images, helping to identify diseases in patients more quickly.

Working with the universities of Nottingham and Southampton, the new research will initially be developed for use on hospital wards and GP surgeries, and by 2050 aims to scale up to walk through airport style X-Ray scanners, which will be able to pick up detailed images of structures often hidden within the human body that can reveal tumors.

COG-MHEAR, led by Edinburgh Napier University will receive £3.2 million, to develop hearing aids designed to autonomously adapt to the nature and quality of their surroundings. Currently only 40% of people who could benefit from

hearing aids have them, while most current devices make only limited use of speech enhancement. These hearing aids would be able to adapt to the nature and quality of the visual and acoustic environment around them, resulting in greater intelligibility of noise and potentially reduced listening effort for the listener.

Quantum Imaging for Monitoring of Wellbeing and Disease in Communities, led by the University of Glasgow, will receive £5.5 million to develop a project which aims to create a home of the future, providing homeowners with feedback on their health and wellbeing.

Bringing clinically approved sensors into the living environment will enable individuals, carers or healthcare professional to monitor blood flow, heart rate and even brain function, in the home. Monitoring physical and emotional well-being in the home will enable tailored programmes to be built for lifestyles improvement, as well as rehabilitation.

U-care, led by Heriot-Watt University, in partnership with the universities of Bath and Edinburgh, it will receive £6.1 million to exploit new laser, optical fibre and imaging technologies, delivering therapy for bacterial diseases and viruses in confined regions of the body such as the lungs, catheters inserted into the body for prolonged periods and areas of the body that have been subject to surgical procedures.

The platform will be able to cut out single cells leaving the cells around it undamaged in cancer surgery, aiming to offer a cure for currently unresectable tumors – tumors that are too close to critical structures and cannot be cut away safely with current approaches.

Science Minister, Amanda Solloway said:

The pioneering projects we are backing today will help modernise healthcare, improving all of our lives now and into the future.

Today's announcement is part of our ambitious R&D Roadmap and underlines our commitment to back our incredible scientists and researchers and invest in ground-breaking research to keep the UK ahead in cutting-edge discoveries.

Scotland Minister, Iain Stewart said:

Scotland is home to a world-leading research and tech sector. This UK Government is determined to support Scottish Universities and the incredible talent they have. We are committed to help keep them at the cutting edge.

It is a fantastic to see such a variety of projects awarded funding, from identifying cancer more quickly to managing health and wellbeing in the home, all will make a positive difference to health of millions of people across the UK and important

contribution to the future of the NHS.

The funding is being delivered through the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), part of UK Research and Innovation, through the Transformative Healthcare Technologies for 2050 call.

EPSRC Executive Chair, Professor Dame Lynn Gladden, said:

The projects announced today will develop new approaches which could become routine in the NHS and community and home care in the coming decades.

Harnessing the latest technologies and the UK's world-leading expertise will allow us to deliver a step-change in how healthcare is delivered and benefit millions of people, emphasising the critical role the UK's R&D sector plays in improving the health of the nation.

Desk takes centre stage

The 'reactor in-core inspection desk', which was used to remotely check conditions deep inside the reactors at Sizewell A Site, was last used in 2005 just before the site stopped generating electricity.

The desk was a vital piece of equipment to help the site safely generate low-carbon electricity for 40 years. Considered cutting edge technology at the time, the desk allowed the operators to identify any maintenance or repairs needed inside the reactor core.

As work to decommission and clean up Sizewell A progressed, the desk became redundant and needed to be disposed of. Once it was carefully inspected and certified as free from contamination, Magnox's disposals contract partner, Ramco, took on the job of finding it a new home.

Having 'one careful owner' for the past half-century, and being a unique design piece, ensured plenty of interested bidders in the recent auction, but the highest bid of £10,200 was placed by a film studio based near Oxford.

The company has previously been involved with productions such as World War Z, Iron Man 2 and Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.

Disposing of the desk in this way has recycled equipment that would have otherwise required months of painstaking work to dismantle for scrap.

Caron Weaver, Engineering and Asset Management Director, said:
“This sale proves that there is still value in Magnox assets if we are willing to look at what we have and find out if there is a market for them.

Our mindset is changing to ensure we exploit our assets and not follow the norm and throw them away as waste; this sale alone has saved Magnox in the region of £10,000.

Before we throw away any item we must consider reuse and we must achieve best value for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, the UK tax payer and, most importantly, the environment through reuse and resale.

Sizewell A’s Disposal Manager, Mark Thurston, added: “Each section would have taken two people at least one week to dismantle for scrap, so this has saved valuable time and brought a small profit. I look forward to spotting it in a film at some point in the future!”

COVID-19: CMA secures refund promise from Bijou Weddings Group

At the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, no weddings were able to take place at Bijou’s venues between 23 March and 4 July. Bijou offered to re-schedule these weddings at no cost, but couples who did not want to rearrange were only offered a very limited refund and would have been left significantly out of pocket by Bijou’s refund policy.

It is the Competition and Markets Authority’s (CMA) view that, in this situation, people should have been offered a fairer refund, with the wedding company retaining only an amount that contributes to the costs it had already incurred and work done before the wedding was prevented from taking place.

After engaging constructively with the CMA, Bijou has now agreed to change its policy to offer a fairer level of partial refund to consumers who did not want to reschedule their wedding. If the company had not done this, the CMA could have taken it to court.

This agreement means Bijou will:

- offer affected customers fairer partial refunds that more accurately reflect the services received up until the date of cancellation
- clearly communicate to every affected customer who has not re-scheduled their wedding the refund process that has been agreed

In the first instance Bijou will offer refunds to customers who did not have insurance. Bijou will not have to give refunds to people who have already received, or are going to receive, their money back through their insurance.

Alongside this action against Bijou, the CMA has published [advice on cancellations and refunds in light of the pandemic's impact on weddings](#). It offers the CMA's view of how the law applies and is designed to help consumers understand their rights and businesses to treat their customers fairly.

The CMA is also publishing an [open letter to providers](#), and contacting some directly, to remind them of their responsibilities under consumer protection law.

This all follows the CMA's decision to prioritise weddings as an area for investigation after receiving complaints to its COVID-19 Taskforce.

Andrea Coscelli, CEO of the CMA, said:

It is good news that Bijou has agreed to offer fairer levels of refunds to its customers, and we encourage other firms in the industry to follow suit.

As lockdown lifts, couples around the country are still dealing with the impact of expensive wedding receptions that couldn't go ahead as planned, and it's important that they get the refunds they are due.

That's why we've also published advice aimed at the wedding industry and consumers, outlining our view of how the law applies to refunds, including what, if any, deductions a wedding business can make, and unfair contract terms. We're also writing an open letter to all wedding businesses, and directly to some, reminding them of their legal obligations.

The news comes as a part of a wider programme of CMA investigations into businesses that have reportedly failed to respect cancellation rights during the pandemic.

Earlier this year, the CMA launched probes into 2 major holiday lettings companies – Sykes Cottages and Vacation Rentals – and secured full refunds for all customers whose trips could not go ahead due to the pandemic.

All updates on the CMA's cancellations work can be found on the [COVID-19 response page](#).

Notes to editors:

1. The details of any refund will depend on the circumstances of each particular wedding. The CMA will not be publishing details of the amounts provided to individual couples.

2. In some cases, where lockdown laws prevent a business from providing a service or the consumer from receiving it, the business may be able to deduct a contribution to the costs it has already incurred in relation to servicing the specific contract in question (where it cannot recover them elsewhere). Read more in [the CMA's statement on weddings](#).
3. [The CMA has recently provided more detail on its view of the law in relation to refunds. Read that statement.](#)
4. The key pieces of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's investigation are the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA) and the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs). The CRA prohibits the use of unfair terms in contracts between businesses and consumers. The CPRs prohibit unfair commercial practices by businesses towards consumers.
5. For more information about the CMA's work on weddings, visit the [inquiry page](#).
6. The CMA's COVID-19 Taskforce was launched on 20 March to scrutinise market developments, identify harmful sales and pricing practices as they emerge and take enforcement action if there is evidence firms may have breached competition or consumer protection law. Read more about the CMA's COVID-19 taskforce on the [CMA coronavirus response page](#).
7. For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.

CMA open letter to the weddings sector

The purpose of this letter is to help businesses in the weddings sector understand how the CMA considers that consumer protection law applies to the wedding contracts they have with consumers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The crisis has highlighted the importance of businesses ensuring their contracts meet the requirements of the law and that they recognise consumers' rights in the current situation.

Further information can be found in our detailed [statement on the CMA's position on how the law operates in relation to contracts for wedding services affected by the pandemic](#).