

UK space technologies to boost NHS Coronavirus response

The UK space industry has some of the brightest minds in the country and is well placed to support the unprecedented national effort to overcome the biggest threat the UK has faced for decades.

Satellite data and drone technology can help meet challenges such as delivering test kits, masks, gowns and goggles, managing infectious disease outbreaks and supporting the health and wellbeing of the nation.

An initial £2.6 million is being made available to fund a number of projects to develop hi-tech solutions to these challenges, in a joint initiative with the European Space Agency (ESA) in support of NHS England.

The NHS – like any health service around the world – only has a limited number of doctors, nurses, and specialist equipment. In addition to lifting capacity of the NHS and asking everyone to stay at home to slow the spread of the virus, the Government has called on industry and the UK's world-leading universities to back the national effort, developing technology and equipment – from hand sanitiser to ventilators – to support the NHS.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

From new advanced software helping speed up cancer diagnoses to satellite communications connecting GPs to patients virtually, the UK space sector has been world leading in applying its innovations to supporting our brilliant NHS.

This new funding will ensure that the latest innovations will be on the frontline of tackling the unique problems the coronavirus outbreak has created, helping medical staff to focus on delivering world-class care.

Professor Tony Young, the NHS national clinical lead for innovation, said:

Everyone in the NHS is working hard to tackle the coronavirus pandemic and provide the best possible care for all our patients, and to do this we've looked outside the health service as well as to existing NHS services, including actively seeking to work with private sector providers and other businesses who can support NHS care.

This is a global crisis that would overwhelm any health service on earth without strong action from the public and their public services, which is why the NHS is looking to industries across the world – or indeed from out of this world – for new and exciting

innovations that could help improve the care we provide to patients or help the NHS respond to this pandemic.

The space-enabled solutions could include satellite communications, satellite navigation, Earth observation satellites or technology derived from human spaceflight. The UK continues to be a leading member of ESA, which is independent of the EU, having committed a record investment of £374 million per year in November 2019. This funding to support the coronavirus response comes from ESA's Business Applications Space Solutions fund, which the UK is the leading investor in.

Nick Appleyard, Head of Downstream Business Applications at ESA's European Centre for Space Applications and Telecommunications in Oxfordshire, said:

Even in normal times, satellites and space technology offer solutions to our needs in connectivity and inclusion, in resilience and logistics, and to support healthcare provision in even the most extreme situations.

The current circumstances challenge the space business community to show just how much it can offer, to help us through this a once in a century event. Speed is of the essence, so let us act without delay.

Space is already playing an important part in healthcare. UK start-up company Lanterne recently announced a free app to help people observe social distancing to slow the spread of coronavirus, using GPS satellite data and AI technologies.

Last year the UK Space Agency provided £5 million for new health technologies inspired by working in space to support NHS England. These included providing real-time diagnosis of bowel cancer, developing more compact 3D X-ray machines and a mobile app that provided exercise plans free from air pollution for those with medical conditions such as asthma.

Meanwhile the UK Space Agency's International Partnership Programme uses UK expertise to support healthcare projects all over the world, including forecasting and providing early warning of dengue fever outbreaks in Vietnam through Earth observation satellites and using telecommunications to extend the reach of basic medical healthcare into remote areas in Nigeria.

The UK Space Agency and UKspace trade body are also working together to help the space sector respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

The UK space sector employs 42,000 people and generates an income of £14.8 billion each year, while supporting £300 billion of wider economic activity through other industries with satellite services such as navigation, communications and Earth observation.

Find out more and [apply for funding](#)

Notes to editors:

The funding is for projects which will address at least one of the following:

- Logistics within the health delivery system, e.g. with drone deliveries
- Managing infectious disease outbreaks
- Population health and wellbeing
- Recovering health system function and handling backlogs after the crisis
- Preparedness for future epidemics

[Former Olympics director leads work to protect clinically vulnerable people](#)

Chris Townsend OBE has been appointed to lead the government's shielding programme to protect those at highest risk from coronavirus, the Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick MP has announced today (14 April 2020).

Mr Townsend, previously Commercial Director for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, will spearhead the huge cross-government effort to ensure that clinically vulnerable people who are advised to shield will receive the vital food and medicine they need.

The government's shielding effort is already underway, and around 250,000 boxes of essential food have already been delivered by wholesalers to those at highest risk across the country, with hundreds of thousands more to follow in the coming weeks.

In these unprecedented times, delivering support on this scale to protect the most vulnerable is a huge and evolving task bringing together national and local government and the food industry. Mr Townsend's breadth of experience makes him the ideal candidate to champion these efforts to protect the most clinically vulnerable in society.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

I am delighted to confirm Chris Townsend has been appointed to lead the huge cross-government effort to support and protect the most vulnerable during this difficult time.

Our number one priority is ensuring the health and wellbeing of everyone during the coronavirus emergency and Chris brings a wealth of experience with him as he steps in to oversee our shielding programme.

Chris has held a number of major roles including CEO of Broadband UK and Commercial Director at Chelsea Football Club. He played a

key role in London 2012 and knows exactly what it takes to recreate the unity and community spirit needed to deliver this vital programme of support to the clinically vulnerable.

Chris Townsend, Chief Executive Officer of the Shielding Programme said:

I am proud to lead the government's shielding programme and determined to do all I can to ensure those most at risk get the support they need.

This is a top priority and I call on everyone to remember the important role they have to play in stopping the spread of coronavirus and to shield those most at risk.

There are around 1.5 million people who fall into the clinically vulnerable group in England. This includes those with reduced immune systems or with severe respiratory conditions.

As part of a series of measures to protect those at highest risk of coronavirus, the packages, which are being left on people's doorsteps, contain essential food and household items such as pasta, fruit, tea bags, tinned goods and biscuits for those who need to self-isolate at home but have no support network of family or friends to help them.

The number of deliveries of food boxes will increase week on week, as the department works in partnership with the food industry, local government, emergency services and voluntary groups to ensure that essential items can be delivered to those who most need them.

[Chris Townsend OBE Biography](#)

He has left his role as Commercial Director at Chelsea Football Club and volunteered three months of his time to lead the programme.

He will not be paid for this role.

Additional information on shielding

- On Sunday 22 March, we published [guidance for the most at-risk group](#), or 'clinically extremely vulnerable', on shielding and how they can protect themselves from coronavirus.
- Shielding is an advice measure to protect clinically extremely vulnerable people who are at very high risk of serious illness from COVID-19 because of a specific health condition by advising them to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.
- It means taking steps to minimise interaction between clinically extremely vulnerable people and others, limiting their potential exposure to COVID-19 and minimising the chances of them catching the virus.
- The shielding measures include staying at home at all times for a period

of 12 weeks including not going to buy food or medicines.

- Expert doctors in England have identified specific medical conditions that, based on what we know about the virus so far, place someone at greatest risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- There are around 1.5 million people in England who fall into this extremely vulnerable group and require shielding.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland welcomes additional funding to tackle coronavirus

- Treasury has now committed a total £340m to support the effort in Northern Ireland
- People in Northern Ireland also benefit from a range of UK-wide measures including £330 billion worth of UK Government backed loans, the Job Retention Scheme and the UK-wide PPE strategy announced last week

The Northern Ireland Executive will receive an extra £200m – a total of £340m – as a result of a boost to the Coronavirus Emergency Response Fund, announced today (Monday 13 April 2020) by the Chancellor Rishi Sunak.

The funding will help the devolved administration at Stormont meet its urgent priorities across public services in Northern Ireland as it works closely with the UK Government to tackle the pandemic.

Welcoming the additional funding, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis MP, said:

“This Government has promised to do everything in its power to help this country defeat coronavirus – protecting people, their jobs and their loved ones.

“This additional funding for the Northern Ireland Executive delivers on that promise by bolstering support for our fantastic public services and their staff – making sure they have the resources they need to meet the exceptional challenges presented by this outbreak.

“We are united in our commitment to tackling coronavirus and working closely with the Northern Ireland Executive as part of our UK-wide effort to fund urgent health priorities at this very challenging time.”

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

“Our public services and its incredible staff are bravely working with immense resolve and skill to keep us safe. We depend on them, which is why we’re giving them the extra funds, tools and resources they need to tackle the virus.

“From the start, I’ve been clear our vital public services will get whatever they need to protect this country and its people from Coronavirus. We are delivering on our pledge.”

People in Northern Ireland also benefit from a range of measures that are supporting people across the UK. Businesses in Northern Ireland have access to £330 billion worth of UK Government backed loans and the Job Retention Scheme and on Friday the Health Secretary announced the UK-wide PPE strategy. This means our heroic front-line workers across the country have the protection they need to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

At the Budget on 11 March, the Chancellor said he would do everything in his power to help Britain defeat Coronavirus. He initially set aside a £5 billion fund as a rapid response, and said that whatever extra resources needed by the NHS and public services would be provided.

[Scottish Secretary welcomes additional £600m for Scotland](#)

The Chancellor has today announced an additional funding of nearly £600 million to help public services in Scotland respond to the challenge of the coronavirus pandemic.

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

“We have been clear that we will do whatever it takes to help all corners of the UK through this crisis and this additional £600 million will go a long way in helping public services in Scotland respond to the huge challenge they are facing. This comes on top of the substantial coronavirus funding package for Scotland already in place, meaning that Scotland will receive a total cash boost of £3.3 billion to help tackle Coronavirus.

“The coming weeks may be difficult, but we will do everything we can to save lives, protect jobs, support our public services, and back our businesses so they can thrive in the future.”

Business and individuals in Scotland will also benefit from UK-wide support measures. This includes a £330 billion package of loans and guarantees for businesses, access to the Job Retention Scheme and support for the self-employed. The UK military is providing both the Scottish Government and the NHS with additional specialist skills and expertise and on Friday the Health

Secretary announced the UK-wide PPE strategy meaning our heroic front-line workers in Scotland have the protection they need to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

The UK Government also expanding testing capacity right across the UK with centres opened recently at Glasgow and Aberdeen airports.

This latest cash boost for Scotland is as a result of the Chancellor further increasing his Budget for the public services fund.

More information on this is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-provides-over-14-billion-for-our-nhs-and-vital-public-services>

[Chancellor provides over £14 billion for our NHS and vital public services](#)

- additional spending for NHS and local authorities included in new figures
- Chancellor launched initial £5 billion Coronavirus fund at Budget but said public services would get whatever they needed
- share for the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland now stands at almost £2 billion

More than £14 billion from the Coronavirus emergency response fund will go towards public services, including the NHS and local authorities involved in the fight against Coronavirus, HM Treasury confirms today (Monday 13 April 2020).

The funding has included more than £6 billion to support our health services, free up hospital beds and deliver urgent priorities including acquiring ventilators, diagnostic tests and protective equipment for NHS staff. HM Treasury support will also enable home delivery of medicines to the most vulnerable people in the country, and it has helped support medical and nursing students and retired doctors and nurses to join the front line.

Alongside £1.6 billion of new funding for Local Authorities, this health service funding means that HM Treasury has provided £2.9 billion to support local services and hospital discharge, reinforcing care for the vulnerable, and meaning that those who are strong enough can leave hospital more quickly, freeing up bed space for patients that need it.

HM Treasury is also working closely with the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In addition to funding urgent health priorities on a UK-wide basis, the Treasury is now providing the devolved administrations with almost £2 billion from this fund through the Barnett

formula.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

Our public services and its incredible workers are working with immense resolve and skill to keep us safe. We depend on them, which is why we are doing everything we can to provide our NHS, local authorities and others, with the resources and tools they need to tackle the virus.

From the start, I've been clear our vital public services will get whatever they need to protect this country and its people from Coronavirus. We are delivering on our pledge.

The £14.5 billion of expenditure approved so far includes:

- £6.6 billion of support to our health services
- £1.6 billion for local authorities
- £0.9 billion to cover extra measures such as food packages for extremely clinically vulnerable people who have been advised to shield themselves from the virus at home and do not have a local network of family and friends to drop off provisions
- £3.5 billion to ensure vital rail services continue to operate now and, in the future, for those who rely upon them for essential journeys
- £1.0 billion for the Scottish Government
- £0.6 billion for the Welsh Government
- £0.3 billion for the Northern Ireland Executive

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