

News story: Government commits £1.8 million to fund innovation in aviation security

Cutting-edge security technology could mean passengers see shorter queues and faster, more effective airport screening processes.

Eight projects have been awarded £1.8 million in government funding to develop innovative technology, which has the potential to bolster airport security while also speeding up the screening process for passengers.

The projects all apply novel approaches to aviation security which have the potential to improve threat detection capabilities. In addition to improving security, some of the projects have the potential to reduce the length of time passengers spend undergoing security checks.

One of the successful recipients of the funding is a small team based in Derbyshire, Security Screening Technologies, whose project uses sophisticated imaging to scan shoes for explosive materials.

The step-on shoe scanner being developed by the company can rapidly form high-contrast images of footwear which can then be analysed by computers that have been 'taught' to recognise threats. Any shoes which are flagged as having areas of concern could then undergo secondary screening.

The project could ultimately mean that passengers would no longer need to remove their shoes before going through airport central search, leading to reduced queuing times and a more customer-friendly experience.

Aviation Minister Baroness Sugg said:

This latest £1.8 million of funding invests in innovative projects that will ensure we are continuing to capitalise on pioneering research. The aim is to have a safer and smoother travel experience for air passengers.

The safety of people travelling on all modes of transport is our top priority and the Future Aviation Security Solutions programme is just one example of the huge importance we place on the security of passengers.

We have a proud history of the early adoption and use of cutting edge technology and this programme is helping to ensure we continue to lead the way in airport security.

The funding is part of the 5-year [Future Aviation Security Solutions \(FASS\)](#) programme, a multi-million pound initiative which seeks new solutions to

strengthen aviation security.

It will go towards supporting a range of projects with pioneering ideas to reduce security threats in airports. These include the use of electromagnetic imaging to detect items of concern in luggage, filtering samples of gas taken from cargo containers to test for explosives, and using machine learning techniques to identify threats on people and in bags.

A joint Department for Transport and Home Office programme, FASS works closely with industry to fund research and encourage innovation.

Security Minister, Ben Wallace said:

We are determined to harness the power of innovation and this ambitious programme will help us continue to use the best technologies as part of our aviation security.

Our work in this area is just one example of how the government is supporting industry, academia and small enterprises to improve our resilience and strengthen our defences against terrorism.

Another of the successful recipients of the funding is a team based in Wales called Sequestim who have designed an alternative walk-through people screening system. State of the art technology within the device could reduce the need for manual checks and mean passengers do not have to remove outer clothing.

The project could also benefit passengers by speeding up the screening process and reducing the risk of false alarms which can cause disruption to passengers and screening processes.

As passengers move past a highly-sensitive camera, the natural radiation from their bodies is measured and turned in to an image. Computer learning can be applied to detect the presence of any threat the passenger may be carrying.

Each project team will have 12 months to develop their technology into a fully functioning prototype that could be trialled at airports.

[News story: Work under way on Phase One of HS2 a year on from Royal Assent](#)

- on the first anniversary of Royal Assent for Phase One of HS2 (23 February 2018), work is under way between London and the West Midlands to build Britain's future railway
- £70 million of funding has begun to be distributed to those affected by

the railway construction

- over £13 million of homeowner payments remain unclaimed and are still available for those living near the Phase One route in rural areas

Just one year after Her Majesty the Queen granted Royal Assent for Phase One of HS2, significant work is under way in preparation for Britain's new high speed railway line, with over £13 million of homeowner payments still available for those living along the route.

The government is encouraging eligible homeowners in rural areas to [apply for a payment under the Homeowner Payment \(HOP\) scheme](#) which launched on February 23 last year – the same day that Parliament approved the [High Speed Rail \(London – West Midlands\) Hybrid Bill](#).

The scheme was set up as a way of sharing the future economic benefits of the railway with local people. Over £7 million of payments have already been made under the HOP scheme, with more than £13 million still to be claimed.

Nusrat Ghani, HS2 Minister, said:

HS2 will be the backbone of our national rail network – improving vital links between some of our biggest cities, driving forward economic growth and regeneration and helping us build a Britain fit for the future.

One year on from Royal Assent we are making real progress, with significant contracts boosting jobs and prosperity whilst we ensure the new railway is not limited to providing faster, better journeys for passengers, but leaves a lasting legacy of improvements along the route for generations to come.

Over £7million has already been paid to homeowners living near Phase One of the route under the HOP scheme. I urge those who are eligible to take full advantage of the £13 million still available under the scheme to ensure the future economic benefits of the railway are shared with rural communities affected by the line.

Construction has already begun along the Phase One route, which will run from London to the West Midlands and is due to be mostly completed by 2025. The first train services are expected to run on the line from 2026.

Enabling work has already begun, contracts for the main civil engineering works including bridges, tunnels, embankments, viaducts and station designs have been awarded, and procurement of the Euston master development partner and London stations, rolling stock and rail systems contracts are under way.

In addition, £70 million of funding has begun to be distributed to those affected by the railway construction, with more funding available for communities and businesses.

Mark Thurston, Chief Executive of HS2 Ltd said:

Since Royal Assent there has been significant progress at HS2 in developing our capability to deliver Europe's largest infrastructure project, and our focus is on designing and preparing the way for the new railway.

Over the last year HS2 has awarded major contracts that will support 14,000 jobs, the National College for High Speed Rail opened its doors to train the future members of our industry, all alongside a major programme of early works.

As construction work continues to ramp up, we remain acutely aware of our responsibilities to those communities that we impact. Minimising disruption is at the heart of our design, while we retain our aim of creating a 'green corridor' consisting of new woodland, wildlife habitats and new amenity facilities to leave a lasting legacy of high quality green spaces all along the route, including the planting of 7 million trees.

Since Royal Assent:

- enabling works are under way in various locations along the line of route – these include archaeological work uncovering the hidden history of Britain, extensive environmental works to mitigate the impact of the railway on the countryside, site clearance and essential utility works
- first recipients of the £40 million [Community and Environment Fund \(CEF\)](#) and [Business and Local Economy Fund \(BLEF\)](#) have been awarded funding for projects along the Phase One line of route, with a further £5 million made available for communities along the HS2 Phase 2a route from the West Midlands to Crewe
- allocations for local authorities under the £30 million Road Safety Fund have been announced, delivering high quality road and cycle safety projects to ensure that England's roads remain among the safest in the world
- the £5 million [Woodland Fund](#) has opened for applications, helping local landowners create new native, broadleaf woodlands and enhance existing woodland sites
- main works civils contracts worth an estimated £6.6 billion awarded to construct the bridges, tunnels, embankments and viaducts needed to drive economic growth and provide seamless journeys
- station design contracts have been awarded, appointing leading creative firms to ensure passengers on our world-class railway will experience modern and accessible stations
- procurement processes are under way for the Euston master development partner, London stations construction contracts, rolling stock contract and rail systems contracts
- land assembly programme is under way
- first temporary track closures necessary for the on-network works have taken place

- Old Oak Common depot decommissioning is under way

HS2 will create around 25,000 jobs during construction as well as 2,000 apprenticeships. It will also support growth in the wider economy, worth an additional 100,000 jobs.

Speech: Matt Hancock speaking at the Annual CBI Chinese Dinner

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Or, as I hope translates to English: good evening Ambassador Liu and honoured guests.

It's a real privilege to be here tonight to celebrate Chinese New Year with you all and mark the arrival of the Year of the Dog.

I was born in the Year of the Horse; apparently Horses like me 'are either naturally good public speakers or have a habit of talking too much'.

I'm not sure which one applies to me – let me know in a couple of hours after I've finished...

It's an exciting time for relations between our two countries. As we open the next chapter in our golden era, look at the breadth of the cultural, political and economic partnership just over the past two months.

The V&A Museum has opened a brand new design gallery in Shenzhen, the first branch of a national British museum outside the UK.

The historic Terracotta Warriors are on display in Liverpool.

And the Prime Minister visited China to meet President Xi and Premier Li, signing over 9 billion pounds worth of commercial deals, building on the vast rise in trade over the past decade.

And as we look forward to the Year of the Dog, I want to take a moment to look at this vital relationship.

And especially, talk about how we can use the transformational power of new digital technology to make this golden era even more golden.

Making the most of change

The world around us is changing faster than ever before. And yet the blistering pace of change we're currently seeing is probably the slowest that we'll see in the rest of our lifetimes.

And it's down to the incredible potential of new technologies, especially AI, which are constantly learning and getting exponentially better every single day.

Both China and Britain understand the potential of this fourth industrial revolution – and the need to relentlessly pursue new technology.

This forward thinking approach has been at the heart of our strengthening relationship over the last decade, and we've seen some remarkable hi-tech success stories over the past few months.

Huawei has recently announced a new commitment to 3 billion pounds of procurement from the UK. Gordon – thank you for your personal commitment and Huawei's vote of confidence in our world-leading tech industry. You provide the sort of leadership which is crucial for forging this sort of relationship.

Cambridge-based Astra Zeneca and Chinese tech giants Alibaba have announced they're coming together to build smart health systems, to help chest patients in China get vital treatment more quickly.

And the futuristic driverless pods used at Heathrow's Terminal 5 will soon be appearing in China thanks to a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding.

And it's not just tech firms and start-ups that are making the most of these opportunities.

Tech is revolutionising all sectors, whether through autonomous vehicles helping us drive more safely or machine learning making it easier for doctors to find cancerous cells, saving and improving lives.

The question that matters is how we can seize these opportunities of change to expand the potential to make both our nations more prosperous and better places to live.

Looking forward

We share this ambition and determination. AI pioneer and founder of Google China Dr Kai-Fu Lee recently said the UK is home to the 'hottest AI companies in the world, producing breakthroughs of global significance'.

Here, we're investing heavily in AI and robotics and are working hard to attract the best and brightest research talent from all over the world.

We are determined to be one of the leading places in the world for the development and deployment of AI. And we will share that global leadership with China.

Our universities – the second biggest destination for Chinese students – lie at the heart of this revolution.

But we cannot do this solely from our shores. To make the most of these opportunities we will need to reach common understanding and co-operate on a wide range of issues. We must do this together.

And let's be frank. China and the UK come at some of the questions around, for example data protection, from very different philosophical backgrounds.

This makes it more important than ever that we understand each other – and respect each other's point of view – so we can come to the right solutions and work together.

We, for instance, have stronger protections for data and intellectual property. And while we ask China to respect these protections, we also respect China, and the progress we have seen in mutual understanding.

I was delighted that in December, we partnered with you in the first bilateral science and innovation strategy that China has developed jointly with another country.

This outlines, in the most advanced way yet, shared principles for intellectual property.

Agreements like this are crucial to unlocking the vast opportunities of co-operation and harnessing this technology for good.

We want to work ever closer with China, and other tech-minded countries around the world.

And I was delighted that during the Prime Minister's recent visit, agreements were signed on emerging technologies across the board – twelve in total, including space, smart cities and autonomous vehicles.

For this is the future. Countries that work with, not against, technology, will be the ones that flourish.

Flourishing as two vibrant, prosperous nations using technology to drive growth and make life better for our citizens and people across the world.

For if we have learnt one thing this past generation, then we have learnt this.

Free markets, in a proper framework, have been the most powerful force for good the world has ever seen – underpinned by the protection of property, openness to trade and sound finance.

China's journey is testament to this fact. Britain may have pioneered the market economy but, by God, China is proving it works.

You have lifted people from poverty more quickly than ever before in human history. We salute you.

And what's more, the free market rests on an understanding that business, done right, is a force for good in the world.

You can't run a good business unless you're solving problems for someone else. Solve them so well that they're prepared to pay you.

This is how prosperity is built. Our nations both understand this.

Conclusion

The UK and China are no strangers to changing history through our innovation and enterprise.

And as we celebrate the Year of the Dog, let's channel this spirit and just imagine what more we can do when we work together in the years ahead.

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Speech: Four years since the illegal annexation of Crimea: article by Boris Johnson

On the night of 22 February 2014, the most powerful men in Russia gathered in the Kremlin and resolved to seize Crimea from Ukraine.

They would later make elaborate efforts to give their decision a veneer of legitimacy – including by staging a bogus referendum – but that meeting between President Vladimir Putin and his security chiefs was designed to seal the fate of Crimea's people.

We know this because Mr Putin said as much. In a documentary for Russian television, broadcast in 2015, the President described the sequence of events.

He decided to grab Crimea during that conclave in the Kremlin 3 weeks before the sham referendum. All those claims about how he acted to protect the region's people or uphold their wishes were, by Mr Putin's own account, utterly mendacious.

So it was that Russia seized 10,000 square miles from Ukraine and broke the first principle of international law – that countries may not acquire territory or change borders by force.

Mr Putin [formally annexed Crimea](#) into the Russian Federation on 18 March 2014. Four years after that event, we should remind ourselves of the enormity of what happened and redouble our determination to stand up for our values and uphold international law.

Russia's land grab in Crimea amounted to the first forcible annexation of the territory of a European country – and the first forcible redrawing of a European frontier – since 1945.

In the process, Russia broke so many international agreements that listing them all is a challenge. To select a few examples, Mr Putin trampled upon [Article 2 of the United Nations Charter](#), the [Helsinki Final Act](#) and the Russia-Ukraine Treaty of Friendship.

He also broke Russia's specific pledge, contained in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, to respect the "existing borders of Ukraine" and "refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine".

And after annexing Crimea Mr Putin went still further, igniting and vigorously fanning the flames of conflict in eastern Ukraine. To this day, Russia continues to deploy troops and tanks in a conflagration that has claimed over 10,000 lives and driven 2.3 million people from their homes.

[Flight MH17 became another victim of this tragedy](#) when a Russian missile launched from an area controlled by Russian proxy fighters blew this passing airliner out of the sky, killing 298 innocent people, including 10 Britons.

All the while, reports have emerged from Crimea of the [oppression of the indigenous Tatar population](#) and the harassment of those opposed to Russian annexation. Despite repeated calls from the UN General Assembly, Russia has refused to allow international human rights monitors to enter the peninsula.

In the end, the security of every nation depends on the essential principle that countries should not change borders or acquire territory by force. That is why the fate of Crimea matters to all of us.

We all have an obligation to stand up to Russia in a measured and resolute way. That means sustaining our Crimea-related sanctions against Russia for as long as the region remains under Kremlin control, and keeping further sanctions in place whilst the [Minsk Agreements in eastern Ukraine go unheeded](#).

These measures are intended to demonstrate that no country, however large, can dismember its neighbour and break international law without consequence.

Nevertheless, while holding fast to our principles, we should engage firmly and purposefully with Russia. We need to communicate with clarity and directness our concern over the Kremlin's actions.

There is no contradiction between dialogue and deterrence – indeed the one can reinforce the other – as I made clear when I [visited Moscow in December](#). As permanent members of the Security Council, Britain and Russia also share special responsibility for international peace and security.

Our motto with Russia must be to 'engage but beware' and both halves of the formula should be pursued with equal resolve. But we must never forget the terrible consequences of that late night gathering in the Kremlin.

Press release: Welsh Secretary visits new US Embassy in London to promote UK-US trade ties

Cultivating and nurturing the strong UK-US trading relationship topped the agenda when Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns met with the Ambassador of the United States to the UK, Robert W Johnson at the new US Embassy building in south London earlier today (22 Feb).

Mr Cairns and Mr Johnson discussed providing certainty, continuity and increasing confidence for UK and US businesses as the UK leaves the EU and how the UK Government is committed to a post-Brexit economy that gives the UK and the USA even more opportunity to trade than ever before.

The meeting comes hot on the heels of the Secretary of State's three-day mission to New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania last week (12-14 Feb).

With the aim of attracting American businesses to invest in Wales and build on a trading relationship already worth more than £3.9 billion, Mr Cairns met with companies operating in sectors from cyber security to pharmaceuticals.

Businesses in Wales already have strong links with some of the strongest and fastest growing economies in the world. There are over 250 American companies based in Wales such as GE Aviation, Ford and General Dynamics.

Welsh companies exported more than £2 billion to the world's largest economy in the year to September 2017.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

As our largest trading partner, the US remains an enormously important market for Wales as well as the rest of the UK.

During last week's trade mission to the USA so many of the businesses I met looked upon the UK as the bridge between America and Europe and a partner of choice for trade.

I was delighted to have the opportunity today to discuss the positive meetings I had there, and to discuss how we can take the next positive steps to create more investment and exporting opportunities for companies on both sides of the Atlantic.

Ambassador of the United States to the United Kingdom Robert W Johnson said:

Wales is an important partner for the United States.

There is a significant amount of trade and investment between us, which is great news for workers in Wales and America.

But there is still a lot of potential for us to do more business, and together we are going to help more companies cross the Atlantic and find new opportunities to succeed.