

News story: Sean Dennehey awarded CBE

Sean Dennehey, the IPO's Deputy Chief Executive, received a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) for services to intellectual property in the New Year's Honours list.

Sean first joined the IPO as a patent examiner in 1978, when the office was based in London. He then moved to Newport in 1991 when the department transferred to its present South Wales base. Sean became Director of Patents in 2004 and Deputy Chief Executive in 2007. He also served as Chief Executive on several occasions, most recently when John Alty left in 2016.

Sean had this to say:

I feel very privileged to be awarded a CBE for my services to intellectual property. This a great honour for me, but I genuinely believe it is also a recognition of the fantastic work done by everyone here at the IPO. Whatever I may have achieved has only been possible because of the great people it's my pleasure and privilege to work with.

News story: Smart energy start-up secures £5.5 million investment

Upside Energy founder Graham Oakes.

In its first major round of venture capital financing, Manchester-based [Upside Energy](#) attracted £5.5 million in order to grow its team and speed up the commercialisation and deployment of its cloud-based smart-grid platform.

[Legal & General Capital](#), the principal investment arm of Legal & General Group, and [SYSTEMIQ](#), an investment and advisory firm, co-led the investment.

Also providing capital are [Modern Energy](#), [Bulldog Innovation Group](#) plus individual investors.

Solution to ease peak-time pressures

Upside Energy has developed a technology that connects and benefits both suppliers and users, while reducing carbon emissions.

While the market for renewable power such as wind and solar is growing, these come from multiple sources and are intermittent. This makes it harder for power stations to generate electricity consistently.

Upside Energy's platform aggregates the energy stored in everyday connected devices, such as batteries and hot water tanks, to create a virtual energy store that can be drawn on as needed.

For [National Grid](#) – Upside Energy's first customer – this means it can better balance electricity supply and demand from renewable sources.

Customers can also save on their energy costs or earn revenue if they avoid using electricity during peak times.

[Upside Energy: balancing peak supply and demand for electricity](#)

Funding and support

In addition to providing access to business connections and mentoring, Innovate UK has supported Upside Energy in multiple collaborative research and development projects.

This includes a total grant of £470,000 to develop a pilot for its core service and communication protocol, with partners [Sharp Laboratories of Europe](#), [Select Innovations \(enLight\)](#), [Tempus Energy](#) and the [University of Manchester](#).

It was also awarded an SBRI 'first of a kind' deployment contract for £43,000 to install home energy storage systems into 400 homes with an existing PV system.

Ongoing work

Upside Energy is currently involved in an Innovate UK-funded project.

It is part of a £2.9 million consortium to develop a physical and digital network to integrate systems that will enable the balancing of heating, cooling, electricity, and carbon, via a low-cost approach.

Other collaborators include [Cranfield University](#), [London South Bank University](#), [Mixergy](#), [Origen Power](#) and [Terra Firma Ground Investigation](#). [ICAX](#) is the lead.

[Press release: PM: Thousands have](#)

saved money already thanks to Government's stamp duty cut

The Prime Minister will be in Wokingham, Berkshire, today [Wednesday 3 January] to meet one of the estimated 16,000 people who have already benefited from changes to stamp duty announced by the Government in the Autumn Budget.

The stamp duty changes will mean a saving of up to £5,000 for first-time buyers in Wokingham.

The Government has abolished stamp duty altogether for first-time buyer purchases up to £300,000, and made this relief available for the first £300,000 of properties worth up to £500,000, providing help for people in higher value areas.

The changes mean a stamp duty cut for 95% of all first-time buyers who pay it and no stamp duty at all for 80% of first time buyers, with savings of up to £5,000.

Over 16,000 first-time buyers are estimated to have already saved thousands of pounds since the changes took effect in November, with over a million first-time buyers set to benefit in total over the next five years.

Ahead of the visit, Prime Minister Theresa May said:

I have made it my personal mission to build the homes this country needs so we can restore the dream of home ownership for people up and down the UK.

In the Autumn we set out ambitious plans to fix the broken housing market and make sure young people have the same opportunities as their parents' generation to own their own home.

This has had an immediate impact, with thousands of people already making savings thanks to our stamp duty cut, and over a million first-time buyers over the next 5 years are expected to save money that they can put towards a deposit, solicitors' fees or furniture.

We are building a Britain that is fit for the future and our message to the next generation is this – getting on – and climbing up – the housing ladder is not just a dream of your parents' past, but a reality for your future.

The stamp duty change builds on the steps already taken to help young people enter the housing market – including the successful Help to Buy scheme and introduction of Lifetime ISAs.

At the Autumn Budget the Government announced the UK will deliver an average 300,000 additional homes each year by the mid-2020s through targeted new financial support and reforms to the planning system. These measures mean that we are on track to raise annual housing supply by the end of the Parliament to its highest level since 1970.

The Budget set out a series of other measures to boost the housing market including:

- Providing £1.1bn to help prepare sites for developers to build homes on
- Providing £1.5bn in SME loans to build houses
- Providing £630m to provide infrastructure to accelerate homes on small sites
- Providing £1bn in borrowing for councils to build new council homes
- Providing £2.7bn of grants to local authorities for strategic infrastructure to support new house building
- Investing £400m to transform estates
- Providing financial guarantees worth £8bn to support housebuilding
- Reforming developer contributions to ensure that funding for new infrastructure and affordable housing is made simpler and quicker

[News story: Annual return deadline imminent](#)

Charities with financial years ending on 31 March 2017 have less than four weeks to go before the final deadline to file their annual return.

By law, these charities must submit a return by 31 January 2018, no later than 10 months after the end of their financial year.

Thousands of charities have already filed their returns but there are still many that have not.

They run the risk of trying to file nearer to deadline day without the correct documentation or, crucially, the password they need to access the online service and then going into default.

To avoid the possibility of this happening, please either [file your annual return for 2017 now](#), if you know what you need to submit, have a current working password, know your charity number and have kept your [charities details, such as email and contact address and current trustees up to date](#).

Alternatively, please make sure you [know where your password is, or apply for a new one](#) (please note this will take at least 24 hours and can only be sent to the email address we have on file). Then [update your charity's details](#) before reading our [detailed guide into how to prepare your annual return](#),

[including what you need to submit](#), based on your charity's chosen structure.

[File your 2017 annual return now](#)

Press release: British Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson visits Kuwait

British Secretary of State for Defence Gavin Williamson visits Kuwait today, Wednesday 3 January 2018, for the first time since his appointment in November 2017. During his visit he called on His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He also called on the First Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and congratulated him on his recent appointment.

This visit is an important opportunity to build on the excellent defence co-operation between the State of Kuwait and the United Kingdom as part of the close and cordial bilateral relations which exist between our two countries. The United Kingdom welcomes the important role which Kuwait is playing in the region – as a key partner in the Counter-Daesh Coalition, as a major humanitarian donor and as a mediator in regional disputes – and more widely as Kuwait joins the United Nations Security Council for 2018-2019