

[News story: Could your experiment fly on the International Space Station?](#)

International Space Station. Credit: NASA.

There is a growing community of scientists looking to experiment in microgravity – where astronauts and objects float weightlessly. The UK Space Agency will select a number of ideas for development which could then be flown on board the International Space Station.

The UK can propose national experiments through the European Space Agency's European Exploration Enveloped Programme, ensuring UK science benefits directly from human spaceflight.

The unique environment of the ISS offers a great opportunity to investigate novel materials, life in space, the human body, fluid physics, new technologies and many other things. Previous experiments with UK involvement have created new metal alloys, studied microorganisms and analysed changes to the human voice.

The European Space Agency announced in December 2016 that it intends for all of the astronauts that were selected in Tim Peake's 2009 class to be assigned a second mission.

Libby Jackson, Human Spaceflight and Microgravity Programme Manager at the UK Space Agency, said:

"This programme gives UK researchers and businesses the chance to do real science in space.

"Microgravity provides a unique facility for scientific research, allowing us to gain new knowledge that will improve life on Earth."

Ideas are welcomed from all UK organisations, including university-led academic research proposals and industry-led commercial research proposals.

Applications ideas will then be invited to provide full detailed experiment proposals. Subject to confirmation must be received by 28 February 2018. Selected of future funding, a number of these experiments will be selected for development and nomination to ESA for flight.

View full [details of the call](#).

News story: Preferred candidate chosen for the role of Executive Chair of the Medical Research Council

Professor Watt is currently Director of the Centre for Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine at King's College London. Here she leads a team of 80 academic researchers and is internationally recognised in her field with particular expertise in the stem cells of healthy and diseased skin.

The current MRC Chief Executive, Sir John Savill FRS, steps down at the end of March 2018 before UKRI is launched.

Professor Watt said:

I am deeply honoured to be selected as the Government's preferred candidate to lead the MRC at this time of extraordinary opportunity for the UK's biomedical researchers.

Sir Mark Walport, UKRI CEO Designate, said:

Professor Fiona Watt is a distinguished biomedical scientist who will be an outstanding leader of the Medical Research Council. I am delighted she has been selected as the Government's preferred candidate for the role of MRC Executive Chair.

The post of MRC Executive Chair is potentially subject to a pre-appointment hearing by the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee. The Committee will consider this in due course. If a pre-appointment hearing is requested then arrangements will be made for this in the New Year.

News story: Businesses encouraged to bid for transformative innovation funding

Innovative businesses with plans to transform UK transport have the opportunity to bid for life-changing funding.

Mobile ticketing via Bluetooth, measures to cut commuting time, and a pilot

helping partially-sighted people navigate urban transport systems are just some of the proposals that have received money in the past from the [Transport Technology Research Innovation Grant \(T-TRIG\)](#).

[T-TRIG announcement DriverNet](#)

Today (18 December 2017) the grant opens for its fifth round of applications – giving businesses the chance to bid for up to £30,000 – a £5,000 increase from previous rounds.

For the first time in the targeted call, bidders have been asked to focus on 2 key themes for this round of T-TRIG funding:

- improving the UK's road network using big data and machine learning
- reducing shipping emissions

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Ground-breaking pilot projects are already benefiting passengers around the country, and this new round of innovation funding will give more businesses a chance to make their ideas a reality.

I look forward to hearing from pioneering companies about their plans.

Up to £1.14 million is available through this round of T-TRIG funding.

[T-TRIG announcement Biella Research](#)

The programme began in 2014 as a pilot, and has subsequently been followed by 4 further rounds of funding.

[News story: UK-China Energy Dialogue](#)

The 5th annual UK-China Energy Dialogue took place in Beijing last week (Friday 15 December).

This year's Energy Dialogue demonstrated the continued importance of secure, affordable and sustainable energy in the golden era of UK-China relations, and both countries continued commitment to the Paris Agreement and efforts to decarbonise our economies.

Co-chaired by Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark and Nur Bekri, Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission and Administrator of the National Energy Administration of China, the Dialogue saw the agreement of an Action Plan to implement the UK-China Clean Energy

Partnership.

Agreed in 2015 as part of President Xi's State Visit to the UK, the UK and China's Clean Energy Partnership MoU is underpinned by an understanding from both governments that each country's significant experience and expertise has the potential to reduce the costs of energy, while promoting opportunities for economic growth, development of cheaper technologies, greater use of clean energy and trade in green goods

The Action Plan signals the next step in the UK-China energy relationship, by creating an agreement to facilitate extended, systematic and sustained collaboration on clean energy between both countries. It sets out future cooperation in priority areas including clean energy technologies, civil nuclear energy, power market reforms and third country activity including the Belt and Road Initiative.

Demonstrating the breadth of UK-China collaboration, the Action Plan will support further collaboration across research, development and deployment; commercialisation; policymaking and implementation; Industrial Strategy; and commercial partnerships. It will be underpinned by a forthcoming UK Energy and Low Carbon Prosperity Fund programme for China.

The Energy Dialogue was held alongside the 9th UK-China Economic and Financial Dialogue co-chaired by Chancellor Philip Hammond and Chinese Vice Premier Ma Kai, providing an opportunity to highlight the links between economic growth and a clean energy transition.

Speech: Immigration Minister: Scotland should be proud of refugee support

It's a pleasure to be here with you all today. The past 2 years of resettlement in Scotland have been a wonderful journey and I'm so pleased to be able to share this celebration with you.

Scotland, along with the rest of the UK, should be proud of the way it has welcomed some of the world's most vulnerable refugees who have sought protection from conflict or persecution in their own countries. It was a real privilege to be able to meet some of these individuals earlier today and hear their stories.

Everyone in this room has played a part in making that happen, and it's with this in mind that I am pleased to have a chance to talk to you about 3 things today.

First, I want to thank you for your support for resettlement in Scotland.

Second, I will say a few words about resettlement across the UK.

And finally, I will touch on how I hope you can be part of the conversation as we consider our future plans for asylum and resettlement.

Resettlement in Scotland

I am delighted with Scotland's achievements so far and your continued support for refugee resettlement. I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to Scottish local authorities, COSLA, the Scottish Government and all other partners in Scotland involved in supporting resettlement.

These families have been welcomed by communities in every part of Scotland. From Argyll and Bute to right here in Edinburgh, you have been providing refugees with a safe environment and the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Resettlement in Scotland has been dependent on collaboration with partners from the beginning of the Scheme, and I am extremely grateful for the leadership and support that COSLA and the Scottish Government have provided so far. Across the UK, we have seen all parts of the community coming forward to resettle refugees.

UK resettlement

The incredible support we have seen here for refugees from Syria is present across the UK. Since the scheme began, we have resettled over 9,300 individuals across 263 local authorities.

This is in addition to the thousands we grant protection to under normal asylum procedures and our other resettlement schemes. In the past year, we have also resettled over 400 at-risk children and their families through our Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme.

Thanks to you, these families receive a warm welcome as well as support to integrate into their new communities, including learning English and preparing for work and self-sufficiency. I ask you all to please continue your good work, as we are on track to meet our commitment to resettle 23,000 refugees by 2020.

Future of asylum and resettlement

As 2020 draws nearer, we must now consider what the future of resettlement should be beyond our existing commitments.

Our ability to deliver resettlement depends on your continued support in offering and providing placements for these refugees. I know the challenges this can present, especially given that this is not the only scheme which requires the support and assistance of local authorities.

I am very grateful for the contribution that Glasgow has made to the asylum dispersal scheme, particularly given the increased pressures in recent years.

I am keen for more local authorities in Scotland to participate in the scheme. I would encourage those of you not participating to do so; we stand ready to work with you to plan how you can participate.

You will also have seen the news that the National Transfer Scheme will be extended to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales to allow the relevant authorities in each nation of the UK to participate and ensure it is a truly national scheme. I hope that I can count on your support for the scheme, helping unaccompanied children to get settled in the areas in which they are going to be looked after as soon as possible.

As we move forward, I want us to work together as we discuss what our next steps should be. Only by taking a collaborative approach will we be able to provide the best outcomes for resettled families and the local communities they are placed in.

I would like to finish by thanking you once again for all that you have done, and congratulating you on this milestone. I look forward to continuing to work with you to welcome and provide sanctuary to more vulnerable families.