

Wrightbus secures £26 million government-backed support in global pursuit of green transport

Press release

UK Export Finance-backed funding will open up the world's first hydrogen-powered, zero carbon double deck bus, to new markets worldwide



- Wrightbus has already secured export contracts to Australia and Germany, with its sights set on expansion in Italy, France, Spain and Southeast Asia
- This growth will boost jobs in Northern Ireland as Wrightbus looks to hire 300 new staff in the next year, after already expanding headcount by over 40% in the last 12 months

UK Export Finance (UKEF) is providing a Northern Ireland-based bus manufacturer with an 80 percent guarantee on its major financing deal from Barclays. The government guarantee is on an £18 million Green Trade Loan and £8 million Green Bank Guarantee, allowing Wrightbus to export its cutting-edge zero emission buses to new export markets.

Based in Ballymena, Wrightbus introduced the world's first hydrogen-powered double deck bus in 2020, and also produces electric-powered single and double-deck buses for export globally. The business is aiming to manufacture 3,000 zero-emissions buses by 2024, comprising 10 percent of the UK's total fleet.

The production of zero-emission vehicles is a capital-intensive process and Wrightbus needed to bridge the gap from the warehouse to road-ready. With orders of over 200 buses from customers, such as the National Transport Authority in the Republic of Ireland, UKEF and Barclays support has enabled Wrightbus to scale up production to meet this demand.

Wrightbus is expanding its exporting operations globally, with sights set on expanding into Italy, France, Spain and South-East Asia. The business hopes to grow exports to over 40% of turnover as demand increases globally. It will

also look to make 300 further hires to support its growth ambitions, bolstering local jobs in the region.

Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch MP said:

It's fantastic to see Great British companies like Wrightbus take full advantage of the opportunities exporting opens up. By expanding into new markets, building on wins secured from our UK-Australia trade deal, and this new UKEF-backed support, they are driving growth and creating high-skilled green jobs in Northern Ireland.

I am proud the Government is supporting British firms to go further, exporting their cutting-edge clean technology to new markets, cutting emissions and boosting jobs across the United Kingdom.

Ben Werth, Wrightbus Chief Commercial Officer, said:

At Wrightbus, we are entering the next stage of our ambitious growth plan, significantly growing our export volume from our UK base and becoming one of the leading battery electric and hydrogen bus manufacturers in Europe. UKEF's support will strongly help us on our future global growth path.

Richard Lowe, Head of UK Large Corporate at Barclays Corporate Banking, added:

WrightBus continues to drive the net-zero agenda in the public transport sector and we are pleased to play a part in their significant ambitions to export this expertise. Barclays are committed to supporting businesses with a strong environmental focus and are pleased to provide financing solutions to deliver the rapid growth of this NI headquartered manufacturer.

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Ending the grain initiative would unleash an “unprecedented wave of hunger and destitution”

Thank you, President, and I thank Under-Secretary Griffiths and Secretary-General Grynspan for their briefings today.

The Black Sea Grain initiative is vital to global food security. The UN estimates that it has indirectly prevented 100 million people from falling into extreme poverty.

Over 60% of the wheat exported under the deal has gone to low and middle-income countries, including via the World Food Programme to Ethiopia, Yemen, and Afghanistan.

Russia’s suspension of this initiative over the weekend has meant over 100 ships blocked from seeking permission to enter Ukrainian ports to load grain.

An average of 100,000 tons of grain is exported each day under the initiative. This is enough to feed 5 million people for a month. The severe impact, should Russia’s suspension of the agreement continue, is clear.

Recognising the global food crisis, the UK has not placed sanctions on food or fertiliser exports from Russia to third countries. We have worked hard, and continue to do so, to ensure there are mitigations in place to avoid indirect impacts of sanctions.

And we note that there has been no decrease in Russian grain exports since the start of Russia’s war on Ukraine.

President, Russia claims it suspended participation in the grain initiative due to an attack on its Black Sea Fleet, falsely claiming those vessels were involved in implementation of the deal.

As we heard from Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, no military vessels or assets are involved in supporting this initiative.

And what Russia neglects to mention is that Russia’s Black Sea fleet is illegally occupying Ukrainian waters and bombing Ukrainian towns.

The global impact of Russia’s war on Ukraine has already been profound. Ending the grain initiative would unleash the “unprecedented wave of hunger and destitution”, of which the Secretary-General’s Global Crisis Response Group warned in June. We therefore urge Russia to renew its cooperation under the agreement so that shipments of grain can continue as before.

We call on Russia to work with all parties to renew the Black Sea Grain Initiative this month.

Thank you.

Foreign Secretary statement on the situation in Ukraine

Mr Speaker, with permission I will update the House about the situation in Ukraine.

This morning Russian missiles again struck Kyiv and other cities, destroying critical national infrastructure and depriving Ukrainians of water and electricity.

Earlier today I spoke to our Ambassador in Kyiv and I heard again of the extraordinary resilience of Ukraine's people in the face of Russian aggression.

At the weekend, Russia suspended its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which has allowed the export of 100,000 tonnes of food every day, including to some of the least developed countries in the world.

Putin is exacting vengeance for his military failures on the civilians of Ukraine by cutting off their power and their water supply, and on the poorest people in the world by threatening their food supplies.

Over 60 percent of the wheat exported under the Black Sea Grain Initiative has gone to low and middle income countries, including Ethiopia, Yemen, and Afghanistan.

It would be unconscionable for those lands to be made to suffer because of Putin's setbacks on the battlefield in Ukraine.

I urge Russia to stop impeding this vital initiative that is helping feed the hungry across the world and agree to its extension.

Meanwhile, Russia's suicide drones and cruise missiles are killing Ukrainian civilians, obliterating their homes, and even destroying a children's playground.

A third of the country's power stations were put out of operation in a single week.

None of this achieves any military purpose.

Putin's only aim is to spread terror and to deprive Ukrainian families of shelter, light, and heat as harsh winter approaches.

I'm sure the House will join me in condemning his breaches of international

humanitarian law.

I'm sure every Honourable and Right Honourable member will share my conviction that Putin will never break the spirit of the Ukrainian people.

And the House will share my incredulity over the glaring contradictions in Putin's thinking.

He claims that Ukraine is part of Russia and Ukrainians are Russians but at the same time he calls them Nazis who must be bombed without mercy.

When he launched his invasion, he convinced himself that Russian forces would be welcomed into Kyiv and they would either support him or be too craven to stand in his way.

He could not have been more wrong.

The last eight months have shown the scale of his miscalculation.

They have shown the barbarity of his onslaught, including the mass rape committed by Russian soldiers in Ukraine.

The UK's campaign to prevent sexual violence in conflict is more urgent than ever and I will host a conference on this vital subject next month.

And now the Kremlin is resorting to peddling false claims, churning out invented stories that say more about the fractures within the Russian government than they do about us.

It is also reprehensible that Iran should have supplied Russia with the Shahed drones that are bringing destruction to Ukraine, in violation of UN Resolution 2231.

On 20 October, the Government imposed sanctions on three Iranian commanders involved in supplying weaponry to Russia, along with the company that manufactures Shahed drones.

Earlier, Putin announced on 30 September that Russia had annexed four regions of Ukraine spanning 40,000 square miles – the biggest land grab in Europe since the Second World War.

Once again, this exposes his self-delusion.

Putin has declared the annexation of territory he has not captured – and what he had managed to seize he is in the process of losing.

On 12 October, 143 countries – three quarters of the entire membership of the United Nations – voted in the General Assembly to condemn the annexation.

Russia had just four supporters – Syria, Belarus, Nicaragua, North Korea – and when those regimes are your only friends, you know you really are isolated.

When 141 countries denounced Putin's invasion back in March, some speculated

if that was the ceiling of the international support for Ukraine.

The latest vote showed even more nations are now ready to condemn Russia.

But Putin still thinks that by forcing up food and energy prices, we will lose our resolve.

Our task is to prove him wrong.

We will not waver in our support for Ukraine's right to self-defence.

I delivered that emphatic message when I spoke to my Ukrainian counterpart on Tuesday and my Right Honourable Friend the Prime Minister said the same to President Zelenskyy, when they spoke on the phone, the first foreign leader he called upon his appointment as Prime Minister.

On Thursday I will attend a meeting of G7 Foreign Ministers in Germany, where I will send a unified signal of our shared determination.

This year Britain has given Ukraine £2.3 billion of military support – more than any country in the world apart from the United States of America.

We will provide Ukraine with more support to repair its energy infrastructure and we have committed £220 million of humanitarian aid.

The House will have noted Putin's irresponsible talk about nuclear weapons, and an absurd claim that Ukraine plans to detonate a radiological "dirty bomb" on its own territory.

No other country is talking about nuclear use. No country is threatening Russia or threatening President Putin. He should be clear that for the UK and our Allies, any use at all of nuclear weapons would fundamentally change the nature of this conflict. There would be severe consequences for Russia.

And how counter-productive would it be for Russia to break a norm against nuclear use that has held since 1945 and has underpinned global security.

Nothing will alter our conviction that the Ukrainians have a right to live in peace and freedom in their own lands.

If Putin were to succeed, every expansionist tyrant would be emboldened to do their worst and no country would be safe.

That is why we stand and will continue to stand alongside our Ukrainian friends until the day comes – as it inevitably will – that they prevail.

Mr Speaker I commend this statement to the House.

Honorary fellowship for Dstl menopause awareness advocate

Nicola, who is a senior principal systems consultant in Exploration Division, has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship at the University of Winchester for her actions as a passionate advocate for menopause awareness at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).

Inspired by her own personal experience, Nicola has become a champion for menopause awareness amongst staff at Dstl. It was for this, and her broader commitment to diversity and inclusion, that she received the accolade.

The Honorary Fellowship is awarded to someone that embodies the University's qualities and values and is a role model for their students.

Nicola said:

Having gone through a painful early menopause I couldn't quite believe that there wasn't more information out there about it.

It seemed so strange that there wasn't an open conversation about something that is likely to impact so many of us, some in a profound way.

It made me determined to make sure we have an environment at Dstl where people feel able to talk openly about the menopause and are supported.

Working with other colleagues, Nicola formed groups where anyone affected by the menopause could come for support and to connect with others. She started Menopause Café events to encourage people to share lived experiences and for supporters to come together and she continues to raise awareness of the menopause, for example with blogs and events. The groups now have over 150 members and around 140 people joined a recent online event with an external menopause expert.

Ed Rothead, who works for Dstl and is a Governor at the University of Winchester, nominated Nicola for the the prestigious award.

Nicola added:

I'm really proud of the progress we've made. We're seeing more and more people coming forward to learn about the menopause, to share their experiences and to normalise the conversation. And to receive an Honorary Fellowship, well I feel really honoured and humbled – for once, I am speechless!

Linda Knutsen, Dstl's Exploration Division Head, joined Nicola at the graduation ceremony. She said:

My heartfelt congratulations go out to Nicola on this fantastic achievement. I'm so pleased that her passion and dedication to improving the experience of colleagues has been recognised in this way.

I'm fully supportive of her efforts – it's so important that we continue to raise awareness of the menopause and break down the stigma that can surround it.

Find out more about [working at Dstl](#).

Over 19 million households have received their council tax rebate

- 99% of eligible households have received £150 council tax rebate
- The government is extending the deadline for councils to ensure as many eligible households as possible receive the payment
- Council tax rebate forms part of £37 billion package rolled out across the year to help people with cost of living

Over 99% of eligible households have received the government's £150 core council tax rebate to help with the cost of living.

Figures published today show more than 19 million households in England were handed payments by the end of September with many councils reporting that 100% of eligible households in their area have now received their payment.

Today's figures show a total of £2.87 billion of the core council tax rebate has gone to households under the scheme, an increase of £217 million from the previous month.

To ensure as many eligible households as possible receive the payment, the government is today extending the deadline for claims, helping councils support the most hard to reach households such as those that moved and did not provide any payment information.

Eligible households have until 30 November to claim the £150 payment, which does not have to be paid back. Anyone who is yet to receive their rebate is urged to check their local council for more information and make a claim.

Councils are being urged to do everything they can to encourage the remaining

households to claim their rebate and ensure as many eligible households as possible get the money that they are owed.

Levelling Up Minister Dehenna Davison said:

Thanks to the tireless work of councils, more than 99% of eligible households up and down the country have received their council tax rebate.

We are now extending the deadline to claim the £150 payment to ensure as many eligible households as possible receive this payment – I urge everyone to check their eligibility and contact their local council if they have not already.

The rebate is part of £37 billion of government support being targeted at those most in need to help with the cost of living. This includes at least £1,200 of extra support for millions of the most vulnerable households this year, with all domestic electricity customers receiving at least £400 towards their bills.

The rebate is available to most households living in council tax bands A to D on 1 April. This includes those who receive Local Council Tax Support, even if their council tax bill for the year is less than £150.

Since announcing the rebate in April, the government has provided £28 million for councils to set up software and recruit staff and will top this up as necessary to cover all reasonable delivery costs. Councils have been given a host of options to make payments quickly and securely including bank account transfers, council tax account credits or a voucher-based system.

Local authorities must also make arrangements for those who cannot access the internet.