

CMA launches investigation into Teletext Holidays over refunds

Press release

The CMA is launching an investigation into Teletext Holidays in relation to refunds for holidays cancelled due to coronavirus.



The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has launched its investigation under consumer protection law after receiving hundreds of complaints that people were not receiving refunds for package holidays cancelled due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

In some instances, Teletext customers reported that they were promised refunds by a certain date, only to have that date pushed back.

The CMA will now engage with Teletext to gather further evidence on whether the company has broken consumer protection law.

Andrea Coscelli, CEO of the CMA, said:

We understand that the pandemic is presenting challenges for travel businesses, but it is important that the interests of consumers are properly protected and that businesses comply with the law.

We'll be engaging with Teletext to establish whether the law has been broken and will take further action if necessary.

Today's announcement follows significant action by the CMA in relation to holiday cancellations. The CMA has [written to over 100 package holiday firms to remind them of their obligations to comply with consumer protection law](#), and has secured refund commitments from a number of holiday firms, including [Love Holidays](#), [Lastminute.com](#), [Virgin Holidays](#), [TUI UK](#), [Sykes Cottages](#) and [Vacation Rentals](#).

The CMA is also [investigating whether airlines have breached consumers' legal](#)

[rights](#) by failing to offer cash refunds for flights they could not lawfully take due to the pandemic.

For more information, visit the [COVID-19 cancellations: package holidays web page](#).

Notes to editors

1. The CMA is at the initial stage of its investigation. Accordingly, it should not be assumed that any business under investigation has broken consumer protection law.
2. Teletext Holidays is the trading name of Truly Travel Limited, which is a subsidiary of Truly Holdings Limited.
3. How the case will progress depends on the evidence – this could include the CMA closing the investigation if it believes that consumer protection law hasn't been breached, securing commitments from the company to address any identified concerns, or taking court action.
4. As an enforcer under Part 8 of the Enterprise Act 2002, the CMA cannot levy administrative fines but it can enforce the consumer law through the courts, and where appropriate, obtain additional measures to improve consumer choice, drive better compliance with the law, or obtain redress for consumers.
5. For further information please contact the CMA press office via press@cma.gov.uk or on 020 3738 6460.

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Action needed to maintain councils' momentum in supporting communities through data-driven innovation

The Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI), the UK government's advisory body on the responsible use of AI and data-driven technology, has published new analysis on the use of data in local government during the COVID-19 crisis. It draws on findings from a forum attended by local authorities across the country, in which they explored changes to data use during the pandemic and discussed barriers to data-driven innovation, as well as new research into public attitudes towards local data use. Key findings include:

- The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the innovative use of data at a local level, with a range of data-driven interventions launched or repurposed during the pandemic. Examples include: the use of the 'VIPER' tool by local authorities in Essex, which has enabled emergency services

to share data in real time; Argyll and Bute Council's trial of drone technology to deliver vital medical supplies across its islands; Glasgow City Council's online platform to promote social distancing; and Hackney Council's analysis of internal and external datasets to help them identify residents who are vulnerable to COVID-19.

- Health data has been shared with local authorities in new ways. For example, local authorities have received access to the NHS shielding patients database, allowing authorities to better target support, including food parcels and pharmacy deliveries, to vulnerable individuals.
- Authorities have had more success in changing how they deploy existing datasets than in acquiring or sharing data with central government or local service providers.
- For sustainable adoption, the governance of new technologies needs to be informed by engagement with local citizens to ensure that it is trustworthy. New polling shows that 50% of people want to engage with their local authority on how data is used to make decisions.

Representatives convened by the CDEI expressed concerns that progress would not be sustained, with data use practices reverting to the pre-pandemic status quo. Reasons for this include: uncertainty around whether emergency access to datasets will be repealed; enthusiasm for data-driven interventions among decision-makers waning; fear of misjudging the public mood on what is an acceptable use of data; and reluctance among local authorities to be a "first mover" in what is perceived to be a high risk environment. Local authorities are also grappling with long-standing barriers to data-driven innovation, including skills gaps, poor data quality, lack of legal clarity and funding challenges.

The CDEI warns that progress is unlikely to be made without dedicated action from central and local government. Whilst encouraging, recent steps forward, such as the publication of the [Local Government Association's guide to predictive analytics](#), and the [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's COVID-19 challenge fund](#), are unlikely to move the needle on their own. Without increased investment and an improvement in data skills, local authorities will struggle to retain and build on recent progress. In its [National Data Strategy](#), the government has outlined an ambition to strengthen skills, improve access to data, and offer greater regulatory clarity, and has committed to working to better support local government in maximising the benefits of data.

While conversations have already started on what practices should be retained post-pandemic, the CDEI's forum pushed thinking further by focusing on the importance of good data governance in enabling trustworthy data use. While responsible data governance was top of mind for data leads, they commented on the difficulty of translating theoretical frameworks into practical steps.

The CDEI has also researched public attitudes towards the use of data in local government, and the results suggest that citizens want a stake in how their data is used. In the representative sample of 2,025 people, conducted with Deltapoll, 50% reported interest in engaging with their local authority on how data is used to make decisions. Levels of understanding around how

local authorities use data is extremely varied: 39% said that they did not know if their personal data is being collected or how it is being used.

The results suggest that the public are more comfortable with data collection and use by their local authority if context is provided. When given specific scenarios, such as the use of data to identify children who might be at risk of domestic violence, the proportion of people who felt comfortable was higher than when asked about the collection and use of raw data (e.g. education data). Those polled felt that the greatest benefit of data use would be improvements to their local community (31%). When asked about measures that would enable trust in local council use of data, the two most popular responses were data anonymisation (24%) and strict access and use controls (23%).

The CDEI is now working in partnership with local authorities, including Bristol City Council, to help them maximise the benefits of data and data-driven technologies, by building trustworthy governance that earns the confidence of citizens over the long-term.

Edwina Dunn, Board member for the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, said : “Almost every aspect of local government has required at least temporary reform during the pandemic. Data and data-driven technologies have played an important part in enabling local authorities to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, helping to inform public health measures, protect the most vulnerable in local communities, and keep public services running. With the right support, councils can retain and build on efforts to utilise data effectively, in a way that is in keeping with the expectations of their residents, to provide local services communities can rely on. The CDEI is looking forward to continuing to work with the government, as well as with local authorities and other relevant stakeholders, on this important agenda.”

John Whittingdale, Minister of State for Media and Data at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said: “Local authorities have gone above and beyond in supporting their communities during the pandemic, and data has been at the heart of some key interventions that have helped the most vulnerable. This government is committed to maintaining the high watermark of data use set during the pandemic, and we recognise the opportunities that data presents to drive better delivery of public services. Through our National Data Strategy, we are committed to working with local government partners to better understand the barriers they face in utilising data to its fullest potential, and this report will be a useful input in identifying how to do so effectively.”

Luke Hall, Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, said: “Councils and council workers have been at the forefront of the response to the pandemic, helping to keep their communities safe, while ensuring essential services have continued throughout. From delivering food parcels, medicines and support to clinically extremely vulnerable individuals to housing rough sleepers quickly, the use of data has been critical. Councils have adapted their services from in-person to online, using technology and data to do so lawfully and securely, and I am determined we continue to use everything we

have learned to make services better for residents so that local communities keep benefitting from more efficient public services.”

James Jamieson, Chair of the Local Government Association, said: “The use of data is one of many factors that councils may consider as part of their decision-making processes. We’re pleased to be working with the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation to bring together councils from across the country so they can share best practice in this area and be as transparent as possible. The good and ethical use of data will help councils support their communities through the pandemic and into the future.”

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Notes to Editor

- The CDEI was set up in 2018 to advise on the governance of AI and data-driven technology. The Centre is overseen by an independent Board, made up of experts from across industry, civil society, academia and government.
- The report draws together the findings of a forum discussion hosted with data and information governance leads from local authorities, and is supplemented by individual interviews and desk research, as well as new research into public attitudes towards local data use.
- The discussion is one of a series of AI Forums hosted by the CDEI, in which a range of experts are invited to discuss the most pressing issues relating to data-driven technology.
- The CDEI has been collating examples of novel use-cases of AI and data specifically being used to counter and mitigate the effects of the pandemic in its COVID-19 repository. The CDEI produced a local government edition of this repository, which revealed an eclectic range of interventions by local authorities.
- The CDEI published a report on public sector data sharing in 2020. It involved a detailed analysis of projects where data had been shared between government departments, and with commercial organisations, identifying recurring barriers, and the steps that were taken to address them. The report focused on citizen trust, arguing that it needs to be addressed if we are to maximise the value of data held. It included a framework to drive forward trustworthy data sharing in the public interest. The CDEI is working in partnership with other organisations, including Bristol City Council, to apply, test and revise the framework in different contexts.
- As part of the CDEI’s review into bias in algorithmic decision-making, the CDEI considered the use of algorithms in local government. It argued that data-driven tools present opportunities for local government, but cautioned that they should not be considered a silver bullet for funding challenges. Moreover, it found that data infrastructure and data quality

were significant barriers to developing and deploying data-driven tools effectively and responsibly, arguing that investment in this area is needed before developing more advanced systems.

- Engaging with the public has been a core component of the CDEI's work since formation. It recently announced that it is stepping up its public engagement efforts to ensure that its advice is grounded in a deep understanding of public attitudes towards data-driven technologies, as well as of the values that citizens want reflected in new models of data governance.
- On behalf of the CDEI, Deltapoll interviewed 2,025 UK adults online between 10th-17th December 2020. The data have been weighted to be representative of the UK adult population as a whole.
- As part of the UK government's consultation on the National Data Strategy, which ran from 9th September 2020-9th December 2020, DCMS consulted on the CDEI's proposed future functions, as well as whether a statutory status would help the CDEI to deliver its remit. DCMS is currently analysing the feedback it received and will publish the outcome in due course.

World-first COVID-19 alternating dose vaccine study launches in UK

- Clinical trial looking into alternating COVID-19 vaccine doses launched today in the UK
- Current programme of 2 doses of the same vaccine over 12 weeks remains unchanged
- Innovative study backed by £7 million of government funding

Patients taking part in a new clinical study launching today will soon receive different COVID-19 vaccines for their first or second dose.

Backed by £7 million of government funding, the study will be the first in the world to determine the effects of using different vaccines for the first and second dose – for example, using Oxford University/AstraZeneca's vaccine for the first dose, followed by Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccine for the second.

The study, run by the National Immunisation Schedule Evaluation Consortium (NISEC) across 8 National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) supported sites, will also gather immunological evidence on different intervals between the first and second dose for a mixed-vaccine regimen against control groups when the same vaccine is used for both doses.

A same-dose regimen is currently implemented for the national COVID-19 vaccination programme, and there are no current plans for this to change. Anyone who has received either the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccination as part of the UK-wide delivery plan will not be affected by this study. They will

receive their second dose from the same source and over the same 12-week interval.

The 13-month study will monitor the impact of the different dosing regimens on patients' immune responses, which have the potential to be higher or lower than from the same dose regimen. Initial findings are expected to be released in the summer. The study has received ethics approval from the Research Ethics Committee, as well as approval from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Should the study show promising results, then the government may consider reviewing the vaccine regimen approach if needed, but only if proven to be safe and recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

Minister for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment, Nadhim Zahawi, said:

This is a hugely important clinical trial that will provide us with more vital evidence on the safety of these vaccines when used in different ways.

Nothing will be approved for use more widely than the study, or as part of our vaccine deployment programme, until researchers and the regulator are absolutely confident the approach is safe and effective.

This is another great step forwards for British science, expertise and innovation, backed by government funding – and I look forward to seeing what it produces.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer and Senior Responsible Officer for the study, Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, said:

Given the inevitable challenges of immunising large numbers of the population against COVID-19 and potential global supply constraints, there are definite advantages to having data that could support a more flexible immunisation programme, if needed and if approved by the medicines regulator.

It is also even possible that by combining vaccines, the immune response could be enhanced giving even higher antibody levels that last longer; unless this is evaluated in a clinical trial we just won't know.

This study will give us greater insight into how we can use vaccines to stay on top of this nasty disease.

The study will initially have 8 different arms testing 8 different combinations, but more products may be added. The 8 arms include:

- 2 doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine at 28 days apart
- 2 doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine at 12 weeks apart – as a control group
- 2 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine at 28 days apart
- 2 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine at 12 weeks apart – as a control group
- the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for the first dose, followed by the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for the second, at 28 days apart
- the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for the first dose, followed by the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for the second, at 12 weeks apart
- the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for the first dose, followed by the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for the second, at 28 days apart
- the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for the first dose, followed by the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for the second, at 12 weeks apart

Over 800 patients are expected to take part in the study, referred to as the COVID-19 Heterologous Prime Boost study or 'Com-Cov', across 8 different sites across England – including in London, Birmingham and Liverpool.

Patients will be recruited over the course of February via the NHS COVID-19 Vaccine Research Registry, with vaccinations expected to start towards the middle of the month and initial results to be made available over the summer period. The UK public can volunteer to be contacted about taking part in the study and further vaccine studies by [joining the registry](#).

The study has been classified as an Urgent Public Health study by the NIHR and is being undertaken by NISEC and the Oxford Vaccine Group, with funding of £7 million from the government through the Vaccines Taskforce.

Chief Investigator Matthew Snape, Associate Professor in Paediatrics and Vaccinology at the University of Oxford, said:

This is a tremendously exciting study that will provide information vital to the roll out of vaccines in the UK and globally. We call on those aged 50 years and above who have not yet received a COVID-19 vaccine to visit our website to find out more about the study and see if there is a study site near them.

If we do show that these vaccines can be used interchangeably in the same schedule this will greatly increase the flexibility of vaccine delivery, and could provide clues as to how to increase the breadth of protection against new virus strains.

National Clinical Lead for the NIHR COVID Vaccine Research Programme, Professor Andrew Ustianowski, said:

This is another exciting step forward in finding a variety of vaccine options for the UK and globally, for which the NIHR is integral to ensuring the participant recruitment for this study and the gaining of robust data on safety and effectiveness.

We need people from all backgrounds to take part in this trial, so that we can ensure we have vaccine options suitable for all. Signing up to volunteer for vaccine studies is quick and easy via the NHS Vaccine Research Registry.

Interim Chair of the government's Vaccines Taskforce, Clive Dix, said:

Thanks to funding from the Vaccines Taskforce, this study will give us valuable insight into how vaccines work together and could give us more flexibility as we continue to tackle this virus in the weeks, months and years ahead.

This is yet another example of the UK leading the way in vital research into COVID-19 – and something that people both in this country, and around the world, could benefit from.

[Volunteers for the study can sign up on the NHS website](#)

This study is separate to the COVID-19 national immunisation programme. Vaccines are not being mixed as part of rollout of the national COVID-19 immunisation programme.

The trial sites include:

- London – St George's and UCL
- Oxford
- Southampton
- Birmingham
- Bristol
- Nottingham
- Liverpool

The Vaccines Taskforce was set up under the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in May 2020, to ensure that the UK population has access to clinically effective and safe vaccines as soon as possible, while working with partners to support international access to successful vaccines. This is to place the UK at the forefront of global vaccine research, development, manufacture and distribution.

The Vaccines Taskforce comprises a dedicated team of private sector industry professionals and officials from across government who are working at speed to build a portfolio of promising vaccine candidates that can end the global pandemic.

The Vaccines Taskforce's approach to securing access to vaccines is through:

- procuring the rights to a diverse range of promising vaccine candidates to spread risk and optimise chances for success
- providing funding for clinical studies, diagnostic monitoring and regulatory support to rapidly evaluate vaccines for safety and efficacy

- providing funding and support for manufacturing scale-up and fill and finish at risk so that the UK has vaccines produced at scale and ready for administration should any of these prove successful

Through the Vaccines Taskforce, the UK has secured early access to 407 million doses of 7 of the most promising vaccines so far. To date, the government has invested over £300 million into manufacturing a successful vaccine. In the Chancellor's Spending Review, published on 25 November, it was announced that the government has made more than £6 billion available to develop and procure successful vaccines.

Oxford University has been placed number one in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings for the fifth year running, and at the heart of this success is our ground-breaking research and innovation.

Oxford is world-famous for research excellence and home to some of the most talented people from across the globe. Our work helps the lives of millions, solving real-world problems through a huge network of partnerships and collaborations. The breadth and interdisciplinary nature of our research sparks imaginative and inventive insights and solutions.

Through its research commercialisation arm, Oxford University Innovation, Oxford is the highest university patent filer in the UK and is ranked first in the UK for university spinouts, having created more than 200 new companies since 1988. Over a third of these companies have been created in the past 3 years.

£11 million boost for energy entrepreneurs to turn green dreams into reality

- £11 million government funding for UK's energy entrepreneurs to turn ideas into clean, green technologies that eliminate carbon emissions
- previous projects include tech to anchor floating offshore wind turbines, using ash waste in glassmaking and new solar heating systems, benefiting from grants of £72 million in total since 2012
- funding supports the UK's commitment to cut carbon emissions, level up the whole country and create new jobs as we build back better from the pandemic

Talented energy entrepreneurs have the chance to benefit from a share of £11 million government funding to turn their ideas into real products and services whilst eliminating carbon emissions.

Energy Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan today (Thursday 4 February) announced the [latest round of the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund \(EEF\)](#), which seeks to drive forward new clean technologies across all sectors of UK industry, supporting the UK to eliminate its contribution to climate change by 2050.

This includes innovations that boost energy efficiency in people's homes, reduce carbon emissions and develop green transport as well as sourcing cleaner and greener ways to generate power and heat.

The UK's budding energy entrepreneurs are being urged to bid for the latest £11 million government funding, which will support between 15 and 20 projects, with each successful bidder receiving up to £1 million.

Successful projects could create hundreds of green jobs and kickstart millions-of-pounds-worth of private sector investment across the UK, helping the country to build back greener as we host the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow this November.

Previous recipients of funding include CCm Technologies in Swindon that is working with Walkers Crisps to implement carbon capture innovations in its factory processes, and Leeds-based C-Capture, which has developed processes to capture harmful greenhouse gases, including an innovative deployment of its technology at the Drax power station in North Yorkshire.

Energy Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

The UK is famous for its strong entrepreneurial spirit. We want to unleash this talent to drive forward green technologies across the UK, helping the public and businesses cut their carbon footprint.

The Energy Entrepreneurs Fund is backing the UK's next generation of inventors and innovators to turn their ideas into reality, with previous successful projects already helping drive down emissions across the country and creating green jobs as we work to build back greener.

Since 2012, the government's Energy Entrepreneurs Fund has awarded £72 million worth of grants, supported 156 projects and leveraged more than £500 million in private investment – a figure that is still growing.

Previous low-carbon projects that have reaped the rewards of government grants, include:

- **Axis Energy Projects, Aberdeen:** received £217,160 to develop an efficient and low-cost method of anchoring floating offshore wind turbines to the seabed that could enable offshore wind technology to be positioned in more remote and deeper parts of the marine environment that are inaccessible to fixed turbines and contributing towards UK commitments to produce 40GW of wind power by 2030
- **Energy Transitions Ltd, Cardiff:** received £160,793 to develop the Steel Zero system, which combines innovative stainless steel cladding panels

with solar energy technology so a building's entire façade can produce clean and efficient heat for the spaces within

- **Glass Technology Services Ltd, Sheffield:** received £508,739 to lead a project with 6 partners to revolutionise glassmaking by replacing existing raw materials with ash waste from the biomass energy industry, reducing the high temperatures required in the glass production process and lowering energy requirements, costs and carbon emissions by up to 10%
- **Radfan, Newcastle:** received £20,250 to develop an innovative fan unit that fixes to the top of any central heating radiator and redirects the flow of warm air horizontally into the room, preventing heat from escaping, keeping people's rooms warm and helping to lower heating bills

UK Net Zero Business Champion, Andrew Griffith said:

I am thrilled to welcome the next stage of this excellent scheme, which is harnessing the creativity of British entrepreneurs to protect both the planet and UK industry by large and small innovations alike.

This is another great step from our government, investing in the jobs of the future and the next generation of UK business who will lead the world in eliminating emissions from industry and driving forward our green industrial revolution.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, David Duguid said:

The UK government celebrates entrepreneurship. We are committed to rewarding innovation and hard work. Entrepreneurs bring solutions to problems, such as climate change, whilst creating new jobs and supporting our economic recovery from coronavirus.

With a long history of innovation, it is no surprise Scotland is producing lots of really exciting startups – including previous Scottish recipients of the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund.

I encourage Scotland's energy entrepreneurs to apply for a share of this £11 million UK government funding as we seek to build back better ahead of COP26 in Glasgow later this year.

Secretary of State for Wales, Simon Hart said:

The chance to share in this funding is fantastic news for promising Welsh energy entrepreneurs. The UK government is committed to achieving net zero carbon by 2050. We will do so by investing in pioneering projects, people and businesses, creating green jobs and opportunities for people across Wales.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis said:

Northern Ireland is a nation that embodies entrepreneurial spirit and is at the forefront of our efforts to cultivate a more environmentally sustainable future across the United Kingdom. With a share of this new £11 million investment, Northern Ireland's entrepreneurs will be able to help supercharge the United Kingdom's 'Green Economy', as we continue to work towards our goal of reducing our emissions to net zero by 2050.

Northern Ireland based projects such as Senergy Innovations and Minesto have already developed cutting edge technologies to harness natural resources for energy, a testament to our extraordinary local talent. I encourage all our budding entrepreneurs to apply for this scheme to help us build back greener from the coronavirus pandemic.

Tom White, CEO C-Capture, said:

Innovations in carbon capture technology are vital in helping the UK achieve its net zero target. Energy Entrepreneurs funding enabled C-Capture to further develop and deploy its technology, to demonstrate the performance and cost advantages which will be advantageous to companies seeking to decarbonise their operations.

The support we have received from the UK government has been of fundamental importance in developing a technology has the potential to capture millions of tonnes of CO₂ per year.

John Blower, CEO Energy Transitions Ltd, said:

The Energy Entrepreneurs Fund acted as a catalyst that enabled us to take forward our Steel Zero solar façade from concept towards market readiness.

BEIS' support, both through the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund grant and the associated 'Incubation Support', which has assisted us in a range of areas, including branding, licensing and marketing, has had a transformational effect and helped us establish a platform from which we aim to create a global clean technology business.

John Baross, managing director Axis Energy Projects, said:

Axis Energy Projects was pleased to have received a grant from the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund. It allowed us to progress our low-cost anchoring method for floating offshore wind turbines not only on the UK Continental Shelf but on a global basis.

Such was our progress that we can now focus on offshore wind farms and on decarbonising existing and new offshore oil and gas production facilities. This would not have been possible without the grant award.

Christine Boyle, CEO Senergy Innovations, said:

For Senergy, the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund programme brought the perfect combination of critical early-stage funding and business acceleration support. The network of academic and business experts that were brought together to support our innovation journey was key to our success.

The wealth of experience both within CLT, the programme partner companies, and the international organisations they collaborate with, was key to delivering our early commercial success. A fantastic opportunity to turn an entrepreneur's idea into a global opportunity.

In 2019, the UK became the first major economy to legally commit to ending its contribution to global warming by 2050. This commitment has been reinforced by the Prime Minister's [ten point plan](#) and the [Energy White Paper](#), published in 2020.

The Energy Entrepreneurs Fund (EEF) is a programme funded through the BEIS £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio.

The EEF supplies innovation grants for small to medium sized enterprises and start-up companies to back the development and demonstration of disruptive technologies whilst also supporting our decarbonisation targets. [Read more details about the EEF](#).

[Read a full list of previous successful projects](#).

Joint statement from Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Gove and Vice-President Šefčovič

Press release

The virtual meeting took place with the First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.



The Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee co-chairs held a virtual meeting today with the First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Vice-President Šefčovič reiterated their full commitment to the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, and to the proper implementation of the Protocol – protecting the gains of the peace process, maintaining stability, and avoiding disruption to the everyday lives of the people of Northern Ireland and a hard border on the island of Ireland.

Both condemned unreservedly any threats or intimidation, noting that the safety and welfare of the people of Northern Ireland and that of our staff would always be the utmost priority.

After a constructive discussion amongst all parties, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Vice-President Šefčovič concluded that the UK and the EU would immediately work intensively to find solutions to outstanding issues, to be addressed through the Joint Committee.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Vice-President Šefčovič will keep in close contact as this work progresses, and will meet again next week in London.

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