

[£2m innovation funding for surveying technology](#)

The [Defence and Security Accelerator \(DASA\)](#) can today announce up to £2m is available for companies who can further develop surveying technology that can assist troops to safely and stealthily advance into enemy territory over water.

DASA's [Map the Gap Phase 2](#) competition, run on behalf of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), seeks innovative ideas from academia and industry that aim to build on the achievements of Phase 1.

Ideas are sought that can develop and demonstrate a number of system demonstrators able to tackle some of the [key issues](#) of gap crossing surveys.

Robert Hammond-Smith, DASA Delivery Manager, said:

Current methods of surveying water crossings expose the soldier to danger at the forward edge of the battlefield, and risks compromising the potential crossing point by revealing our interest in that location.

We are seeking collaborative technology solutions that reduce the burden on the soldier, enabling better decision making and reducing the incumbent risks.

We aim to put those solutions into the hands of our soldiers more quickly by asking our friends in academia and industry to work together on ideas, so that DASA can accelerate solutions to a higher level of readiness.

Successful submissions will demonstrate a clear plan to a [Technology Readiness Level \(TRL\) 6](#) demonstrator (Technology model or prototype demonstration in a relevant environment) as part of Phase 2, with an outline plan of how the technology could be developed into an in-service capability.

Phase 2 of the competition launches today, [full details and requirements can be seen on the competition page](#).

Please note that the Phase 2 DASA competition follows Phase 1. We suggest that potential bidders familiarise themselves with details of the [Phase 1 Competition](#) and also the successful suppliers.

It is not a pre-requisite to have participated in or submitted a bid for Phase 1 to submit a proposal for Phase 2.

[Contracts for Phase 1 were announced last year.](#)

Phase 2 of Map the Gap requires a wide range of technologies to be integrated and demonstrated by a solution. Joint submissions are encouraged to fully utilise a range of industry expertise.

For this phase we are encouraging collaboration between suppliers. To support this we have a [short survey](#) to collect details of suppliers who wish to explore collaboration possibilities.

We will be hosting 15 minute one-to-one teleconference sessions for prospective suppliers, giving you the opportunity to ask specific questions.

If you would like to participate, please register on the Map the Gap 1-to-1 Eventbrite pages.

[To book for Wednesday 27 January 2021.](#)

[To book for Thursday 28 January 2021](#)

This competition closes on Tuesday 9 March 2021 at midday (GMT).

DASA – the MOD’s innovation hub – finds and funds exploitable technology to give Her Majesty’s Armed Forces and UK security a strategic advantage over adversaries while supporting the nation’s prosperity.

DASA works with scientists from Dstl, academia, and industry to rapidly accelerate and develop these new technologies.

[CMA breaks up motor parts merger](#)

The CMA will require TVS Europe Distribution to sell 3G in order to protect competition in the commercial vehicle and trailer parts sector.

Following an in-depth Phase 2 investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has concluded that TVS Europe Distribution Limited, which owns Universal Components UK Limited (Universal Components), must sell the competing 3G Truck & Trailer Parts Ltd (3G) business it purchased in February 2020.

In its final report, published today, the CMA found that Universal Components and 3G currently compete closely to supply replacement parts for commercial vehicles and trailers to motor factors (local distributors), who in turn sell on to independent garages and repairers in the UK.

After the merger, customers seeking to purchase a wide range of parts from a single supplier would likely have limited alternatives to choose from. This could lead to local distributors and repairers facing higher costs and poorer service, such as longer delivery times or worse stock range and quality.

In reaching its decision, the CMA analysed a significant body of evidence looking at how closely the 2 businesses compete, including the companies' internal documents and feedback from customers and competitors.

The companies' internal documents showed that the businesses monitor each other closely when deciding their strategies and setting prices. There was also considerable evidence that Universal Components' decision to buy 3G was motivated, in part, by the desire to remove one of its main competitors from the market.

The CMA has concluded that the only effective way to address the loss of competition from the merger is to require TVS Europe Distribution Limited to sell 3G to a buyer approved by the CMA.

Kirstin Baker, Inquiry Group Chair, said:

"These are two of the leading suppliers of commercial vehicle and trailer parts to businesses across the UK. Following our in-depth investigation, we have found that their merger would likely result in a significant loss of competition, leading to distributors, garages and repairers facing less product choice, poorer service and higher prices.

"These garages and repairers play a vital role in keeping commercial vehicles on the road, so our decision that 3G must be sold to a buyer approved by the CMA will protect businesses and consumers in the UK in the long term."

For more information, visit the [TVS Europe Distribution Limited / 3G Truck & Trailer Parts merger inquiry](#) web page.

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.

[Hundreds of thousands more laptops to support disadvantaged pupils learn at home](#)

The government has today announced a further 300,000 laptops and tablets to help disadvantaged children and young people learn at home.

Part of the Get Help with Technology Programme, the 300,000 boost takes the total number of laptops and tablets for disadvantaged young people up to 1.3 million.

Data to be published today by the Department for Education will show that over 700,000 laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools to date. Over

100,000 were delivered last week alone and by the end of the week three quarters of a million will have been delivered to schools and local authorities. The vast majority of secondary schools have already received devices and we are delivering more this week. Schools that are yet to order devices can still do so.

The additional 300,000 devices lifts government investment by another £100 million, meaning over £400 million will have been invested in supporting disadvantaged children and young people who need the most help with access to technology through the pandemic. The additional devices will support schools and colleges across England, with top-ups to their original allocation, offering further support to disadvantaged children. Device allocations have been made with the aim of prioritising those most in need. Schools being able to order even more devices, should they require them, will allow for more devices for these children if needed.

This devices programme, which has been distributing laptops and tablets since May last year, goes hand in hand with the government's work with the UK's leading mobile network operators, enabling schools to request free uplifts in data for disadvantaged families. The government's work to support young people with access to technology sits alongside strengthened minimum standards for remote learning, with schools now expected to offer pupils online lessons and a set number of hours of high-quality remote education for pupils – increased from the government's previous minimum expectations.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I know just how difficult the past year has been for parents and teachers, now more so than ever. I want nothing more than for every child to be in the classroom with their friends and teachers, but with that not possible we are doing everything in our power to support schools with high-quality remote education.

These additional devices, on top of the 100,000 delivered last week, add to the significant support we are making available to help schools deliver high-quality online learning, as we know they have been doing.

Our guidance reflects the increased number of hours pupils should benefit from, and schools publishing their plans lets parents know that their children are not missing out on the great education they deserve.

The government will also today publish a remote education framework to support schools and colleges with delivering education for pupils who are learning from home. The frameworks will help them to identify the strengths and areas for improvement in the lessons and teaching they provide remotely, and points towards resources that can help them improve where needed.

The frameworks should be adapted by schools and colleges to fit their individual context. They are voluntary, and were developed in partnership

with sector leaders. They have been tested with schools and colleges, and welcomed, with feedback suggesting they are valuable in helping deliver quality remote education for their pupils.

The EdTech Demonstrator network is also in place to offer advice, guidance and training on ways technology can be used to enhance remote education arrangements. This includes weekly webinars and support alongside bespoke advice and training.

Today's announcements follow confirmation from Oak National Academy last week that major mobile operators Vodafone, 02, Three and EE have committed to working together to make access to the site free – and from BT, on Monday 11th January, that BT and EE customers will be able to access BBC Bitesize resources for free from the end of January. The BBC has also committed to providing a vast array of educational content across its channels, providing even more support for home learning.

Notes to editors

Remote learning

The remote education provided by schools should be equivalent in length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school and will include both recorded or live direct teaching time, and time for pupils to complete tasks and assignments independently. The amount of remote education provided should be, as a minimum:

- Key Stage 1: 3 hours a day on average across the cohort, with less for younger children
- Key Stage 2: 4 hours a day
- Key Stages 3 and 4: 5 hours a day

On Friday, the Department updated [guidance](#) for FE colleges to reflect delivery expectations of remote education: Further education guidance for restricting attendance during the national lockdown

Devices All schools have now been invited to order devices. Based on BESA ICT Survey 2019 data survey, it is estimated that schools already owned over 1.9 million laptops and nearly one million tablets before the pandemic.

Internet access Schools can request free mobile data uplifts for disadvantaged families, via the Department for [Education's website](#): The level of additional data for families will vary by provider, but Three and EE customers will receive unlimited data. Other providers supporting the offer include Tesco Mobile, Smarty, Sky Mobile, Virgin Mobile, Vodafone and 02. This is in addition to 4G wireless routers already provided, with free data for the academic year, and we continue to provide 4G wireless routers where children need to access remote education.

Inspection Report Published: An inspection of the Home Office's use of sanctions and penalties

The Home Office is able to make use of a range of sanctions and penalties to encourage and enforce compliance with the Immigration Rules. Some of these are directly within its control, while others are "owned" and administered by other government departments, agencies or third parties with input from the Home Office in the form of data, typically about individuals who do not have right to enter or remain in the UK or whose rights, for example the right to work, are restricted.

This inspection examined how efficiently and effectively the Home Office used these sanctions and penalties, which included looking at what it was seeking to achieve with each and to what extent it was succeeding.

Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and UK Visas and Immigration all use sanctions and penalties. The inspection found that current measures have been introduced piecemeal, with little evidence of consistency or coherence in their design or in their application, and no overall strategy or underpinning rationale, beyond a broad understanding that their primary purpose is to encourage compliance rather than simply to punish breaches of the Rules.

In approaching this inspection, inspectors looked beyond the Home Office for examples of best practice in the design and use of sanctions and penalties. Though now dated (it was published in November 2006), Professor Richard Macrory's paper on 'Regulatory Justice: Making Sanctions Effective', produced for the Cabinet Office, offered the most comprehensive and relevant thinking on the subject.

Measured against Macrory's "principles" and "characteristics", the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) sanctions and penalties and how they are administered fell short on several counts, most notably their failure to "measure outcomes not just outputs", to "justify their choice of enforcement actions year on year to stakeholders, Ministers and Parliament", and to "be responsive and consider what is appropriate for the particular offender and regulatory issue". Some were closer to the Macrory "tests" than others, but I concluded that all of the sanctions and penalties would benefit from thorough review and evaluation.

My inspection report contained two recommendations. It was sent to the Home Secretary on 21 October 2020, by which time the Home Office had committed to "a full review and evaluation of the hostile/compliant environment policy and measures – individually and cumulatively", as recommended by Wendy Williams in her 'Windrush Lessons Learned Review' (WLLR).

Given the range of parties affected, and the Home Office and other resources involved in the administration of BICS sanctions and penalties, I suggested

that this exercise should be extended to cover all sanctions and penalties with the aim of ensuring that each is proportionate, necessary and well-managed and that together they form a coherent whole.

The department's partial acceptance of this recommendation, in reality is a rejection to commit "at this stage" to a wider review. From experience, if the department fails to seize the moment things are quickly forgotten as new priorities take the attention. I therefore doubt that a wider review will ever be completed.

My second recommendation concerned the need to improve record keeping and data collection and analysis. This has been a regular theme of inspections throughout my six years as Independent Chief Inspector and is true of all areas of BICS. In accepting this recommendation, the Home Office has referred to a baselining exercise to identify the key indicators against which it can measure the impact of the compliant environment, which it will complete by July 2021.

For many this will seem to be a case of too little, and much too late. From ICIBI's perspective, in 2016, and again in 2018 and 2019, a series of inspection reports recommended that the Home Office should monitor and evaluate the impact of the hostile/compliant environment. These recommendations were only "partially accepted" and never implemented. Had they been, some of the harms suffered by the Windrush generation and others may have been avoided.

UK Government announces business measures over Xinjiang human rights abuses

Today (12 January) the Foreign Secretary has announced a package of measures to help ensure that British organisations, whether public or private sector, are not complicit in, nor profiting from, the human rights violations in Xinjiang.

Evidence of gross human rights violations including extra-judicial detention and forced labour has been growing, including proof from the Chinese authorities' own government documents. The UK Government has repeatedly called on China to end these practices, and uphold its national laws and international obligations.

The measures are designed to send a clear signal to China that these violations are unacceptable.

The UK Government is announcing a review into which UK products can be

exported to Xinjiang and the introduction of financial penalties for businesses that do not comply with the Modern Slavery Act. Further measures include increasing support for UK public bodies to exclude businesses complicit in human rights violations from their supply chains. Together these measures will help UK organisations ensure that they are not contributing to the abuse of the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

Coordinated international action is needed to address the risk of forced labour entering global supply chains, and the UK is working closely with its partners on this issue. Today, Canada will make a parallel announcement of measures to help ensure Canadian businesses are not complicit in forced labour in Xinjiang.

The Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

The evidence of the scale and severity of the human rights violations being perpetrated in Xinjiang against the Uyghur Muslims is now far reaching. Today we are announcing a range of new measures to send a clear message that these violations of human rights are unacceptable, and to safeguard UK businesses and public bodies from any involvement or linkage with them.

This package will help make sure that no British organisations, Government or private sector, deliberately or inadvertently, profit from or contribute to the human rights violations against the Uyghurs or other minorities in Xinjiang.

The Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Britain will always stand up for those suffering dreadful human rights abuses and today we are bringing forward measures which will help protect the minority populations in Xinjiang.

Businesses and public bodies must be more vigilant than ever before and ensure they are not inadvertently allowing forced labour in their supply chains.

The Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

These new measures demonstrate that we will not turn a blind eye nor tolerate complicity in the human rights abuses taking place in Xinjiang.

Forced labour, anywhere in the world, is unacceptable. This Government wants to work with businesses to support responsible practices, and ensure British consumers are not unwittingly buying products that support the cruelty we are witnessing against the Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang.

Specifically, the measures include:

- A review of export controls as they apply to Xinjiang to ensure the Government is doing all it can to prevent the exports of goods that may contribute to human rights abuses in the region. This review will determine which additional specific products will be subject to export controls in future.
- The introduction of financial penalties for organisations who fail to meet their statutory obligations to publish annual modern slavery statements, under the Modern Slavery Act.
- New, robust and detailed guidance to UK business setting out the specific risks faced by companies with links to Xinjiang and underlining the challenges of effective due diligence there.
- The Government will provide guidance and support for all UK public bodies to use public procurement rules to exclude suppliers where there is sufficient evidence of human rights violations in supply chains. Compliance will be mandatory for central government, non-departmental bodies and executive agencies
- A Minister led campaign of business engagement to reinforce the need for UK businesses to take action to address the risk.

The UK, working with partners including Canada, has led international action to hold China to account for their actions in Xinjiang, supported research which has built the evidence base for action, and urged UK business to conduct robust due diligence to ensure its supply chains are free of forced labour. The UK has led international joint statements on Xinjiang in the UN General Assembly Third Committee and the UN Human Rights Council, including bringing forward the latest statement which was supported by 39 countries, together with Germany, in October last year. The UK was also the first country to require companies by law to report on modern slavery in their supply chains. Canada and the UK's approach will help to defend the rights of Uyghurs.