

L@b Brief | August 2023

INSIDE *this* ISSUE

	Exclusive! GAMBICA members gain access to new purchasing conglomerate
	Comment: <i>What should we do about China?</i>
	Looming sanctions on Russian metals for EU importers
	£210 million to tackle antimicrobial resistance
	Freezer challenge saves 21 million kWh: full list of winning labs
	Relatives of Nigerian Princes now targeting UK businesses
	New training requirements on diisocyanates
	Research round up; Micro-and nano-plastics contribute to antibiotic resistance; AI allows paralysed patient to speak; Americans hoovering up so many drugs they are changing their rivers; Using ChatGPT as the next generation of lab assistants
	Export Control Joint Unit asks licence applicants not to contact them
	Interested in expanding into Europe?
	Changes to goods vehicle requirements for Authorised Consignors
	New DBT offer for those attending Medica, ... <i>and</i> showcase your innovations at DSIT
	HR News: Employers need to take reasonable steps to prevent harassment for gender-critical beliefs
	GAMBICA's newest member: Total Clean Air offers complete clean air solutions
	Plus: GAMBICA events and industry events update

Hello again,



What do you think about how the UK should deal with China?

Everyone is aware of the increasing difficulty in obtaining export licenses for China but worsening relations are affecting business and academia in a variety of ways. Recently, a China scholar in the US resigned, in the face of increasing difficulties caused by his university's fears of being seen as "too chummy" with China. In the UK, universities

have been under political pressure to diversify their recruitment and reduce their reliance on Chinese students, despite their importance as a source of income. There has been a fall in Chinese student numbers in the UK for the first time since records began in 2014 with the number down from 13,180 in 2022 to 11,630 this year; Chinese students now make up 22.7 per cent having fallen by 2.4% in a year.

Economic commentators point to increasing weaknesses in China's economy which, post 'zero COVID', grew at just 3.2% compared with America's near 6%. China seems to be suffering from the opposite problem to our current inflation: consumer prices fell in the year to July with some suggesting that China may enter a deflationary trap like Japan's in the 1990s. Joe Biden has called China's economy a 'ticking time-bomb' because of its ageing workers and unemployed young and in August the Chinese government announced that it would no longer publish the unemployment rate for young people - the July figure had hit a record high of 20.5%.

Financial instability at the world's second largest economy is likely to have global implications, according to Dr Jan Knoerich an expert in the Chinese economy based at King's College London. "It's never good when China's economy doesn't do well because it's going to spill into the rest of the world." Another China commentator, George Magnus, sees more far-reaching effects: "We probably have to come to terms with the idea that China in the 2020s and the 2030s will not be the China that we have become accustomed to in the past 30 or 40 years, and that its economic trajectory is much more damaged than the one that we have come to know." Dependence on China as a manufacturing centre may be likely to diminish as other areas – such as India, Malaysia, Korea and Mexico – grow.

So if China is no longer in the ascendent – does that make it more or less of a threat? Should we export as much as we possibly can now or should we capitalise on China's apparent weakness to spread our future risk and strengthen our calls for improved human rights?

It sounds as if we need a strategy.

Toodle pip!

Jacqueline

UK News

Exclusive: GAMBICA members gain access to new purchasing conglomerate

UK EXPORT Finance, one of the biggest export credit agencies in the world, is tasked with using its billions to support UK industry. To gain UKEF backing, overseas funding recipients are generally required to purchase a percentage of goods for their projects from the UK. However, in the past this requirement has generally been rather laxly enforced.

Now, a medical goods purchasing conglomerate has been formed in the UK to take advantage of the many overseas hospital projects being backed by UKEF. It is introduced to the client companies by UKEF and liaises with them at a very high level. The conglomerate then brings together companies in the UK which are able to supply goods and services needed for these hospital projects. The objective of the conglomerate is to source sufficient UK goods and services to reach the required percentage of the value of the hospital project which often seems to be c40%). The total orders for UK companies on one such recent tender was £170m.

GAMBICA has now been invited to join the conglomerate, giving members access to bid for all the laboratory equipment required for hospital developments.

Members recently engaged with a tender round prompted by the conglomerate for a Burns Hospital in Angola being developed by a Portuguese company with UKEF backing. Now, a contract has been signed by UKEF for the development of three hospitals in Oman and details will be circulated to GAMBICA members as soon as they become available.

Some GAMBICA members have been disinclined to bid for this sort of international tender in the past because of the time it takes and the sometimes poor quality of the information available about what exactly is required. But according to Graeme Hall of Brandon Medical, the big advantage of these tenders is that the project management teams often work on series of tenders and become, in effect, repeat customers, and because the buyers really need to buy British, it is easier to engage with them and gain an understanding of what they need.

Graeme is one of the originators of the conglomerate having first got involved with UKEF-inspired tenders as part of his day job working for a company which supplies equipment for operating theatres. According to Graeme, the big advantage of selling to UKEF funded projects is that you are able to participate at the top end of the tender, rather than having to go in at the lowest possible price.

“On a recent tender, one of the products listed was a highly sophisticated operating table. The spec was so high that we couldn’t supply it, but we wondered why a small African hospital needed such an expensive operating table, so we called them up and suggested a cheaper alternative. They were very grateful and we got the order.”

As soon as we get the details of the Oman hospitals tender, we will circulate it to members and will arrange a meeting to discuss it.

Looming sanctions on Russian metals for EU importers

EUROPEAN IMPORTERS face a potential sanctions headache from next month, when rules take effect requiring them to prove products imported from anywhere in the world do not contain any Russian-origin steel or iron.

September 30 marks the start of the EU's 11th package of sanctions against Russia which requires importers to provide documentary evidence that goods purchased are completely free of Russian-origin steel and iron, a particularly problematic requirement for companies importing finished products since even small items like screws will have to be confirmed as not originating from Russia.

A European Commission Q&A published in July specifies that importers will have to obtain mill test certificates showing the origin of steel and iron inputs. For finished goods, certificates must show the name of the facility and country where the steel was melted or processed, as well as the relevant customs codes. "The importer is responsible for the information provided... and submitted to the customs of the member state of importation," the Q&A says, adding that customs authorities may demand additional evidence if there are suspicions of Russian involvement.

The restrictions will apply from September 30, with a transition period applying to inputs covered by certain customs codes. The deadline for certain semi-finished products is April 1, and October 1 next year for products rolled from Russian slab.

It is expected that the steel industry will be able to advise on specific differences between tariff codes and what they cover at product level, unfortunately, many product types fall into multiple codes.

Turkey is thought to be the exporting nation most affected by the reforms. The country was the largest exporter of finished steel products to the EU in 2021 and sources large volumes of steel from Russia, with Turkish Statistical Institute data showing the country's hot-rolled coil steel imports from Russia increased 90% year on year in the first quarter of this year.

For more information click [here](#).

New training requirements on diisocyanates

DIISOCYANATES ARE widely used in different applications in industry, most notably in the manufacturing of polyurethanes and as hardeners in industrial paints, glues, varnishes and resins. Changes to EU REACH which came into force on the 24th August 2023 impose training and certification requirements for users of diisocyanates. The restriction aims to minimise the adverse health effects induced by exposure to diisocyanates at the workplace (including respiratory sensitisation and occupational asthma) and along the entire supply chain.

From 24th August 2023, in the UK and EU, training will be required for all professional and industrial users of polyurethane adhesives and sealant products with a total monomeric diisocyanate concentration of > 0.1%. All staff who come into contact with a substance containing diisocyanates should have been trained and certified.

Training programmes are available online in several languages, and are typically either free or low cost. Three European industry bodies **FEICA, ISOPA, and ALIPA, are providing training on the safe use of diisocyanates.** The training is available for professional and industrial users of polyurethane adhesives and sealants, and is being offered through a voucher scheme. You can use voucher code FEICA_21_G to get the training for free.

Alongside providing the training, employers will be required to collect evidence of its successful completion, such as by storing certificates. Training certificates are valid for five years, after which they need to be renewed.

There are new polyurethane adhesives available based on micro-emission technology which have a concentration of monomeric diisocyanates which is less than 0.1% by weight, so training is not required. Industrial users of PUs have two options, train their teams, or opt for materials that require no training. Both approaches enable safe and productive processes for manufacturers using polyurethane adhesives.

More information is available [here](#).

£210 million to tackle antimicrobial resistance

UP TO £210 million of funding is to be invested in a surveillance project across Asia and Africa to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and reduce the threat posed to the UK.

The funding - from the government's UK aid budget - will support the Fleming Fund's activities to tackle AMR in countries across Asia and Africa over the next 3 years.

It will bolster the surveillance capacity in up to 25 countries where the threat and burden of AMR is highest - including Indonesia, Ghana, Kenya and Papua New Guinea - with more than 250 laboratories set to be upgraded and provided with state of the art equipment. This investment includes new genome sequencing technology which will help track bacterial transmission between humans, animals and the environment.

UK Special Envoy on AMR Dame Sally Davies said:



“This world-leading investment in AMR laboratories, workforce and systems is a vital contribution to realise our vision of a world free of drug-resistant infection.”

For more information click [here](#).

2023 Freezer Challenge reduces energy use by 21 Million kWh

NEARLY 2,000 laboratories around the world participated in this year's Freezer Challenge — a free competition that promotes energy efficiency through best practices in cold storage management — and together saved 20.7 million kWh of energy, corresponding to about 14,663 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, more than double last year's amount.

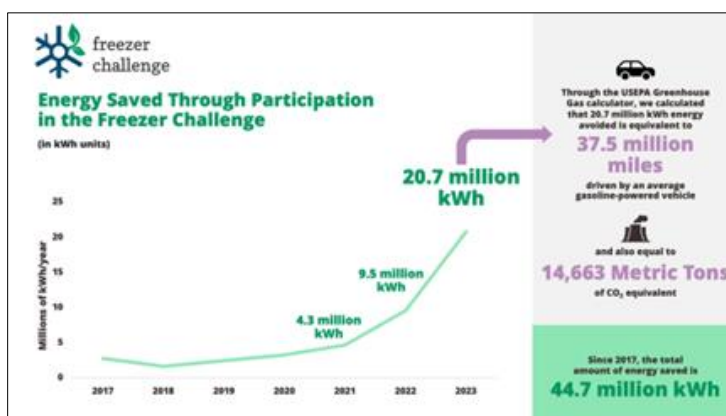
Run by My Green Lab, the Freezer Challenge was launched in 2017 and has saved 44.7 million kWh worth of energy to date, reducing CO2 emissions by 31,678 metric tons.

Over the course of the six-month competition, labs accumulate points for adopting sustainable

practices concerning their cold storage units, including actions that enhance energy efficiency, ensure sample accessibility, and maintain sample integrity.

According to James Connelly, CEO, My Green Lab, "The exponential growth in impact from the Freezer Challenge signals a shift in the science industry to embrace sustainability. It proves that small actions in the lab multiplied across the globe can have a significant impact."

Labs from 27 different countries contributed to a 42% rise in participating organisations compared to 2022, reflecting a wider global involvement.



2023 Freezer Challenge Winners

Biotech/Pharmaceutical sector winners

Top organisation	AstraZeneca
Winning streak	Amgen
Top large lab	Genetic Toxicology - Cell Health Assessment of Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Johnson & Johnson in Belgium
Top medium lab	Bioprocess Development (BD) Pre-Pivotal Drug Substance Technology (DST) of Amgen, USA
Top small lab	Biobank Gothenburg of AstraZeneca, Sweden
Top biorepository	Q2 Solutions Biorepository of Q2 Solutions (IQVIA), UK

Academic sector winners

Top organisation	University of Alabama Birmingham, USA
-------------------------	---------------------------------------

Winning streak University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA
Lab winning streak The Indiana CTSI Specimen Storage Facility, Indiana University School of Medicine
Top large lab GI Onc at Johns Hopkins University
Top medium lab Illinois Natural History Survey-Wildlife Veterinary Epidemiology Laboratory
Top small lab Kerppola Lab of University of Michigan, USA
Top biorepository Vet Anatomy Dissection Lab of University College Dublin, Ireland

Government sector winners

Top gov organisation National Institutes of Health, USA
Top large lab CFIA Greater Toronto Area Lab of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Canada
Top medium lab Biochemistry Laboratory of Royal Botanic Gardens, UK
Top small lab Biotoxin Chemistry Lab of Marine Institute Ireland in Ireland
Top biorepository Molecular Biology of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK

Hospital/clinical/other winners

Top organisation Amsterdam UMC
Winning streak Boston Children's Hospital
Top large lab Southwest Pathology Services of SYNLAB Group, UK
Top medium lab Lab of Experimental Immunology - Klein Lab of University Hospital Cologne,
Top small lab Immunologic Monitoring and Cellular Products Laboratory of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center, USA
Top biorepository Amsterdam UMC Biobank

Honorable mentions

Organisations (all sectors):
Institute of Cancer Research, UK
Johns Hopkins University, USA
Genentech
Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Johnson & Johnson
Q2 Solutions (IQVIA)
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, USA
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK

Labs (all sectors, all lab sizes):

- Cihakova Lab - Johns Hopkins University
- Quinn/Tobian Lab - Johns Hopkins University
- Edberg Lab - University of Alabama Birmingham
- Ray Ming Lab - University of Illinois Urbana Champaign
- Clinical Research Specimen Processing (CRSP) Core, University of Michigan Health Rogel Cancer Center, USA
- TS&BA Pathology Lab - Amgen
- Cardiometabolic Disorders (ASF) - Amgen

- Lab Services in Slough UK - Avantor/UCB
- AD Bioassay Cambridge - Biogen
- DTMP-LECP Team in Belgium - Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Johnson & Johnson
- Labcorp Biorepository - Labcorp Central Laboratory Services
- S&T Labs - Nestlé
- Maple Leaf Foods, Technical Services, Central Laboratory
- Integrated Diagnostics - LifeArc
- Biopathology Center at Nationwide Children's Abigail Wexner Research Institute
- Mark Andermann Lab - Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
- Pathology-Biobanking-Research - Amsterdam UMC
- Experimental Vascular Medicine Lab of Amsterdam UMC

Note: Winning Streak Awards are given to previous year's winners that exceeded their energy savings from last year.

Learn more about the Freezer Challenge [here](#).

Relatives of Nigerian Princes now targeting UK businesses

INDIVIDUALS POSING as a relative of someone having been left a fortune which needs to be sent out of the country, have traditionally targeted their 'Advance Fee Fraud' at individuals, but are now increasingly turning their attention to businesses.

Scammers pose as senior civil servants or buyers of goods which they offer to buy and pay for up front. However, before they pay sums into your bank account, they ask a representative of your company to travel to the region to build trust. The scammers then attempt to involve their victim in their deception or request fees for setting up the transaction.

Although not a direct replica of the Advance Fee Fraud (AFF) (known internationally as '4-1-9' fraud, referring to the section of the Nigerian penal code which addresses fraud schemes and also known as the Spanish Prisoner or Nigerian Prince scam) the fundamental way it works is the same, luring victims in over a period of time.

The sharing of bank details, for a supposed inbound transfer for the goods ordered, serves mainly to reassure the scammers that the victim is taking the bait although thefts from these and other accounts cannot be ruled out, especially as over a period of time more and more data will have been collected by the scammers. In most cases, on arrival in the country the deal will be 'threatened' in order to persuade the victim to provide a large sum of money to save the venture.

The US and Belgian governments have warned companies about the misleading sales tactics or scams in which entities pose as the legitimate recipients of sums due on an invoice but with different bank details – these scams can be particularly difficult to spot.

There is information and advice from the UK's Met Police on this and other scams [here](#).

Link to US advice is [here](#), to International Trade Administration advice [here](#) and from the global exhibitions industry, [here](#).

Research round-up

AI allows paralysed patient to talk at near-normal speed

SUPER-FAST AI-assisted brain-computer interface (BCI) systems are working towards granting people who can no longer speak the ability to communicate at near conversation-level pace.

In 2021, [Jaimie Henderson](#), a professor of neurology at Stanford University, asked patients to imagine writing out characters, a process called 'mindwriting'. By translating the resulting brain activity, the researchers were able to train a typing program to output 90 characters per minute, the current record for such software. The new research has now shattered that record.

A paper published in *Nature* describes how a brain implant was inserted into a part of a motor-neurone patient's brain detected that electrical signals representing tiny movements in the jaw, mouth and tongue were still present, even if the muscles required to act on them no longer worked properly.

Henderson and his team were able to train an AI algorithm to read the signals produced when the patient attempted to read preset sentences. The model guessed the statistical likelihood of particular word sounds having been intended based on the patient's brain activity, in the same way that ChatGPT guesses what to write in response to a prompt.

The output was then run through a language model, which guessed what words the phonemes were most likely to have built up to. The training sessions continued twice a week for four months. By the time the training was complete, the patient's attempted sentences could be decoded into on-screen text at an average pace of 62 words per minute, more than triple the speed attained in Henderson's mindwriting paper.

For more information see the original story from *Technology Networks* [here](#).

Americans hoovering up so many drugs they are changing the microbiome of rivers

IN A study into how swimming in lakes and rivers affects surface water, researchers in Colorado have shown that recreation can alter the chemical and microbial fingerprint of streams especially in hotter summers when the water levels drop.

On a bank holiday in 2022, researchers at the Colorado School of Mines collected water samples from 'Clear Creek'. On many weekends, as many as 500 people per hour use the creek for tubing and swimming. The team also sampled an undisturbed location upstream for comparison purposes.

The researchers then looked for changes in chemicals in the water using inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) and liquid chromatography-high resolution mass spectrometry (LC-HRMS).

The team detected a slew of human-related compounds not typically present in the water, including human metabolites, pharmaceuticals, illicit drugs, sunscreens and more. Specifically, preliminary results show the presence of cocaine, lidocaine (a topical anesthetic), fexofenadine (an antihistamine), lamotrigine (a treatment for seizures and bipolar disorder) and gabapentin (a medication for seizures and nerve pain), as well as polyethylene glycol (used in medications) and phthalates (plasticizers). Organic sunscreens and UV filters were also detected.

The study results also showed that human recreation stirred up sediments in the creek, thereby raising the water's concentration of metals, including copper, lead, zinc, aluminum and iron. Much of the metal was in particulate form, which means it's small enough to affect underwater species—for example, by clogging the gills of fish.

For more information see the American Chemical Society [here](#).

Micro- and nanoplastics in agricultural soil could contribute to antibiotic resistance



Microscope image of microplastic fragments isolated from farm soil.

Credit: Jayita De and Pratik Banerjee, University of Illinois.

FARMING RELIES heavily on plastics which have become widely dispersed in agricultural soils in the form of microplastics and nanoplastics and new research from the US suggests that such micro- and nanoplastics in agricultural soil could contribute to antibiotic resistant bacteria with a ready route into our food supply.

“Plastic itself may not be very toxic, but it can act as a vector for transmitting pathogenic and antimicrobial resistant bacteria into the food chain,” says Jayashree Nath, postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition at the University of Illinois.

Plastics are an excellent adsorbent, which means chemical substances and microscopic organisms stick to it. Chemicals that would ordinarily move through soil quickly — things like pesticides and heavy metals — instead stick around and are concentrated when they encounter plastics. Similarly, bacteria and other microorganisms that occur naturally in soil preferentially congregate on the stable surfaces of microplastics, forming what are known as biofilms.

When bacteria encounter unusual chemical substances, they activate stress response genes that incidentally help them resist other chemicals too, including, sometimes, antibiotics. And when groups of bacteria attach to the same surface, they have a habit of sharing these genes through a process called horizontal gene transfer. Nanoplastics, which can enter bacterial cells, present a different kind of stress, but that stress can have the same outcome.

“Bacteria have been evolving genetic mechanisms to cope with stress for millions of years. Plastic is a new material bacteria have never seen in nature, so they are now evoking these genetic tool sets to deal with that stress,” said co-author Pratik Banerjee. “We have also shown bacteria may become more virulent in the presence of plastics, in addition to becoming more resistant to antimicrobials.”

Gene transfer between bacteria on microplastics has been documented in other environments, particularly water. So far, the phenomenon is only hypothetical in agricultural soil, but that doesn't mean it's not happening.

For the full story from the University of Illinois click [here](#).

Using ChatGPT as the next generation of lab assistants

IN A new study profiled in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, a team has developed AI model, ChatGPT, to perform a particularly time-consuming lab task: searching scientific literature and built a second tool to predict experimental results.

Reports from previous studies offer a vast trove of information that chemists need, but finding and parsing the most relevant details can be laborious with researchers having to sort through hundreds of scientific papers describing a variety of experimental conditions. Researchers have previously attempted to coax AI to take over this task; however, the language processing models they used required significant technical expertise, and applying them to new topics meant changing the program.

To analyse text from scientific papers, the team gave ChatGPT prompts, or instructions, guiding it through three processes intended to identify and summarise the experimental information the manuscripts contained. The researchers carefully constructed these prompts to minimise the model's tendency to make up responses, a phenomenon known as hallucination, and to ensure the best responses possible.

When tested on 228 papers describing crystalline metal-organic frameworks syntheses (MOFs) the system extracted more than 26,000 factors relevant for making roughly 800 of these compounds. With these data, the team trained a separate AI model to predict the crystalline state of MOFs based on these conditions. And finally, to make the data more user-friendly, they built a chatbot to answer questions about it. The team notes that, unlike previous AI-based efforts, this one does not require expertise in coding. What's more, scientists can shift its focus simply by adjusting the narrative language in the prompts. This new system, which they dub the "ChatGPT Chemistry Assistant," could also be useful in other fields of chemistry, according to the researchers. More information [here](#).

Upcoming GAMBICA Events

Avoid over-paying on commission – Export Group Meeting | 12 September | 10.30-12.00am | GAMBICA offices, Rotherwick House

THE NEXT export group will focus on agents and distributors and how to avoid over-paying on commission. Export group members will remember Steve Sidikin of legal firm, Fox Williams. Steve is a specialist in the law around agents and distributors. At the next meeting Steve will be offering advice on how best to manage commissions and avoid overpaying. He will cover:

- Does an agent always have an entitlement to commission on repeat transactions?
- Think you're exclusive? Think again! What happens when parties have their wires crossed about the extent of contractual relations?
- New developments in an agent's entitlement to post-termination commission?

- Agency termination and indemnity – are there ways to reduce the amount payable? The meeting will be at GAMBICA's London office, starting at 10.30 on 12 September. To reserve your place, click [here](#).

Masterclass on growing business overseas | 28 September | 10.30-12.00am | Teams

THE NEXT Business Growth Community meeting will start with a masterclass in growing your business overseas from the COO of GC Biotech, Debora Marchese.

Debora will cover:

- Market entry strategies
- Market analysis and localisation strategies
- International marketing and branding
- Regulatory compliances

Debora is an experienced sales manager in the life science sector, having worked both in Asia and Europe as part of international teams. For most of her career, she has been in charge of the business growth of SMEs into global markets, by taking care of business development, marketing and sales, both for B2B and direct sales. She is now working as COO at GC biotech UK, a laboratory automation start-up, while part-time helping small companies expand to international markets.

The second half of the meeting will discuss the survey developed for BGC members to use with their customers which is being developed by John Sargent, Navigator Research.

To reserve your place, click [here](#).

After-Sales Group meeting | 29 November | 10.30-12.00am | GAMBICA London Office

WE ARE pleased to announce that Chris Wingad of Gilson has agreed to take the chair of the After-Sales Group. The next meeting is 29th November, please do put the meeting in your diary now. Information will be circulated shortly on the agenda.

Industry Events

JASIS 2023 Symposium | Japan | 6-8 September 2023

THE MAJOR event for scientific analytical systems and solutions takes place as an in-person event again this year with an online exhibition which started in July. For information about exhibiting click [here](#).

Lab of the Future congress Europe 2023 | Amsterdam | 26-27 September 2023

DESIGNED TO cater for life-science research leaders and biotech start-ups and dedicated to gaining seminar participation, Lab of the Future aims to shape the ideas that drive the future. For more information click [here](#). Super early bird rate saves 800 Euros, apparently.

SEHTA and Psephos Biomedica Conference | London | 12 October 2023

SEHTA HAS also teamed up with a medical device regulatory agency Psephos to produce an update on software as a medical device. For information click [here](#).

SEHTA International MedTech Expo | London | 3 November 2023

APPROXIMATELY 220 delegates are expected to this MedTech/NHS sector event at the Tower Bridge Hotel in London. Early bird stand price is £575 plus VAT. For information click [here](#).

Future Surgery 2023 | ExCeL, London | 14-15 November 2023

THE SHOW claims to offer access to thousands of surgeons and operating theatre staff, and to have over 100 exhibitors. Stands start from £1,926+ VAT. To book contact a.stewart@closerstillmedia.com

Products in Compliance Conference | Heathrow | 15-16 November 2023

RINA, ONE of GAMBICA's technical consulting partners, holds an annual [Products in Compliance conference](#) featuring up-to-date information on current and upcoming product compliance issues via practical guidance, insights from officials, and examples on how to effectively respond in your own organisation. [You can download the 2-day conference programme here](#).

As we are partners, they have offered GAMBICA members a 10% discount, which you can get by using the code **GambEECn23** when [booking via this form](#). You can find [conference pricing here](#), with a further discount if you book before 4 October.

Leadership and management qualifications funded by DfE | Your offices | Timings to suit you

DfE FUNDING of 95-100% is available for leadership and management training delivered entirely in the workplace. Training is at two levels, for team leaders and first line managers and for senior managers and decision-makers. Funding available is **£4,500** for level 3 courses and **£7,000** for the level 5. [Click here for L&M brochure](#), [Click here for level 3 details](#), [Click here for level 5 details](#)

Export News

Export Control Joint Unit asks licence applicants not to contact them

MEMBERS HAVE once again been reporting lengthening delays for export licences and GAMBICA has requested a follow-up to our meeting with the directors of the Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU), to identify the causes of the delays and to see what can be done to reduce them. Before this could happen however, the ECJU issued some public information on the delays citing particularly the time staff are having to spend testing the new LITE licencing platform as contributing to its reduced resources. They have asked that those with applications pending track them via the website and do not call the ECJU which, they say, will result in further delays.

This situation is clearly unacceptable and GAMBICA is seeking to have the matter raised in parliament. The full text of the ECJU communication is reproduced below. We will keep you informed on developments.

“We strive to respond to as many cases as possible within our primary target of 70% of cases responded to in 20 days, or secondary target of 99% of cases responded to in 60 days. However, our targets are becoming increasingly challenging to consistently meet as we see a significant increase in the types of cases where goods or destinations are more complex and therefore take longer to properly consider than others.

“For example, China is the destination which receives the highest number of single individual export licence applications (1,074 in 2022). Our processing times and refusal rates are higher for exports to China than most other destinations due to changes in UK government policy. In 2022, we completed 53% of standard individual export licences (SIEL) applications for China in 20 days compared to 62% for all destinations, and 81% in 60 days compared to 89% for all destinations. Refusals can take longer to process and our refusal rate for China SIEL applications in 2022 was 11.9%, compared to 2.5% of SIEL applications for all destinations.

“The operational teams are also spending significant time getting to use and help develop the new licensing platform, LITE, which is currently in a private beta phase. This involves overcoming the challenges of a new system, carrying out testing and providing feedback to the development team in advance of its roll out to all users next year.

“We would appreciate your support in ensuring our Case Officers have the maximum amount of time to work through your applications as quickly as possible. You are able to view the current status of your application in SPIRE at any time. We would encourage you to help yourself to this information to stay up to date. We are always happy to help in situations where you have a specific issue with an application, for example, where there are amendments or if you have received a request for further information (RFI) from us. But please be aware that it may be counterproductive if you are contacting Case Officers to chase applications which have not yet reached our secondary target of 60 days as it takes time away from them being able to process cases. This can become a particular issue, as with many businesses, when we are managing our service during the busy summer months.

“In setting out some of our current operating challenges, and helping you to understand what to expect, we hope this will help you to plan more effectively with your customers. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.”

Interested in expanding into Europe?

THE DIFFICULTIES of exporting and of getting export licences has caused some GAMBICA members to think of moving some of their operations to a European centre. If that is something you have been considering, then InvestRegionLeipzig may be of interest to you. Situated along the Czechia border, the Leipzig area has an average monthly office rental cost of 11 Euros/m² and an average purchase price of 10 Euros/m² for commercial space and an up to 30% subsidy through Sachsische Aufbaubank.

The UK representative for InvestRegionLeipzig has offered to speak to anyone interested at Medica or to present a webinar for members. Let me know if you are interested or otherwise you can contact her at b.verma@invest-region-leipzig.de

Changes to goods vehicles requirements for Authorised Consignors

UK AUTHORISED Consignors are authorised to carry out transit operations without presenting the goods at the customs office of departure. If you use one, you need to know about some changes to the requirements for providing information on GVMS (Goods Vehicle Movement Service) in relation to the Transit Accompanying Document Movement Reference Number (TAD MRN) which came into effect on 1st August 2023.

It is now a requirement for all the DUCR (declaration unique consignment reference) numbers that may be covered under the TAD MRN to be included on the GMR (Goods Movement Record). This will ensure that consignments are presented correctly for customs processing.

Any Authorised Consignors who rely on the hauliers they use to raise the GMR, need to be aware of these changes. If you are an Authorised Consignor who holds one of the following authorisations and you are moving the goods in accordance with those authorisations, you can still use the TAD MRN. This is because the additional processes confirm that all the goods have been presented correctly for customs processing.

- Customs Supervised Export (CSE)
- Designated Export Places (DEPs)
- Internal Temporary Storage facilities (ITSFs), or
- Export Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

If you need further guidance, contact HMRC Transit Policy at transitpolicymailbox@hmrc.gov.uk putting GVMS Input Requirements in the subject line.

New DBT offer for those attending Medica

COMMERCIAL OFFICERS from the Department For Business and Trade will be present in force at Medica in November. This year they will be using a platform called swap card for UK companies to book meetings with them. GAMBICA has a restricted number of licences to swap card for members, so please let us know as soon as possible if you would like one. If we cannot provide one for everyone, we will be able to book meetings on your behalf.

There will also be informal opportunities for companies to meet the Commercial Officers who will be attending from Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay, Ecuador, Austria, Bulgaria, Ireland, Panama/Central America, Netherlands, Germany, China, Finland and Iran. If you are interested in any of these markets, do enlist their help.

DBT Medica Website

A special DBT Medica website will be launched in the next few weeks which will have a programme overview all the activities open to UK companies at the exhibition including presentations and some networking receptions. You are welcome to join these events. There will also be pre-Medica briefings to assist companies with their preparation ahead of

MEDICA, these include those listed below, calendar invites should be sent out within the next 2 weeks.

17/10 1 - 2.30pm | Conducting market research & language & culture considerations

24/10 1 - 2pm | Optimising your website ahead of Medica and social media hints & tips

1/11 1 - 2pm | Exporting your medical devices to Europe

6/11 1 - 2pm | Drop in session ahead of Medica

Berlin Partner Breakfast Briefing

[Berlin Partner](#) is inviting British companies to a Breakfast Briefing on the MedTech and Digital Health Cluster of the Berlin Brandenburg region. On Tuesday 14 November from 9-10 they will hold a presentation in English on their stand presenting opportunities of the region which is home to stakeholders such as global companies, renowned scientists, first-class hospitals, innovative start-ups, and specialists from all over the world.

After the presentation there is time for Q&A and networking with companies from the region exhibiting on the stand. A list of exhibitors on the stand as it stands so far can be seen [here](#). There are limited spaces available for this opportunity. If you are interested in attending, please send an expression of interest, outlining what your business does (in no more than 50 words) and why you would find attending this session valuable/the benefits you would get from attending the session to ronja.baller@fco.gov.uk (DBT post in Germany) by **COP 13th September**.

Showcase your innovations at DSIT

LEADING FIRMS, technology businesses and research organisations have been invited to showcase their innovations at the entrance to the new Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) headquarters, as part of the Department's plans to champion innovation and the pioneering work of UK industry and academia and make their work visible to ministers, businesses, government officials, and influential individuals who visit.

Those selected to exhibit will be promoted across the department's social media channels as well as at internal events, highlighting their work to the innovators and decision makers who are leading the push to cement the UK's status as a science superpower.

Businesses and organisations who are interested in exhibiting at DSIT, can contact exhibit@dsit.gov.uk for more information.

HR news

Employers need to take reasonable steps to prevent harassment for gender critical beliefs

LAW FIRM Pinsent Masons has drawn attention to a recent employment tribunal case which demonstrates the need for employers to ensure that staff are not harassed for beliefs, which are protected, even if they are gender critical.

The tribunal found that an employer was liable for harassment for comments made to an employee who had expressed gender critical beliefs during a Teams discussion which raised issues relating to trans equality. The company was aware of a need to update its policies and provide appropriate training and the tribunal did not consider it had taken all reasonable steps to prevent harassment.

A member of staff's claim followed statements made by others during the Teams call, and post-call actions by other staff members. The employer was also unable to rely on the statutory defence that it had taken all reasonable steps to prevent the harassment. In particular, the tribunal noted that the Dignity at Work policy was overdue for review, and that "The definition of harassment refers to being "related to age, gender, race, impairment, religion, nationality or any personal characteristic". It is notable that it does not make reference to belief." (We would add to this that it also refers to gender, rather than the protected characteristic of sex.)

It is a somewhat cautionary tale for employers who may wish to open up controversial equality topics to promote inclusion and for staff debate.

More information on this rather puzzling case is available [here](#).

Company news

GAMBICA's newest member Total Clean Air Limited offers a total clean air solution



PHILLIP GODDEN, founder of Total Clean Air, had nearly 30 years' experience in the clean air sector when he decided to create his own exemplar clean air company by employing the best in the industry. Now five years into the company's journey, Total Clean Air is firmly established and working towards taking its place as one of the most qualified and capable clean air companies in the UK. With a management team of 14 and almost 50 skilled specialist tradesmen and engineers focused on delivering larger cleanrooms installations – the company is now highly capable and manages multi-million pound CDM projects for some of the most prestigious organisations in the world. In an era where air quality

and safety are paramount concerns across many industries, Total Clean Air Limited is in the vanguard of the United Kingdom's clean air, cleanroom, and containment solutions and has used its commitment to excellence, security, and innovation, to rise to prominence as the go-to partner for a diverse range of sectors. Research facilities, pharmaceutical production sites, and electronics manufacturing plants all benefit from Total Clean Air's cleanroom offerings, which guarantee adherence to the most stringent standards and regulations.



Total Clean Air Limited specialises in all aspects of clean air technology, from products to testing services, including cleanrooms, local exhaust ventilation (LEV), fume cabinets, and biological safety solutions, custom containment, aseptic, pharmaceutical manufacturing, lithium battery manufacture and more and has invested in becoming

UKAS Certified as a product manufacturer and testing house, to assure customers that everything supplied by the company hangs from a validation and quality foundation. The company's diverse portfolio encompasses a spectrum of services, ranging from basic filtration products to complex cleanroom installations that adhere to the stringent standards of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and all are tested and certified by the in house, UKAS certified testing and validation team. The company also acts as the UK's preferred partner and reseller of the Erlab range of filtration products.

Phillip regards reputation as the cornerstone on which the company is built and is particularly pleased to have been given the necessary security clearance for police and defense contracts. But it may be in the realm of biological safety that the hazards can be most serious, and here, expertise can make the difference between success and catastrophe. So Phillip has concentrated heavily on ensuring proficiency in this domain. He is confident in assuring clients that Total Clean Air's comprehensive biological safety solutions can offer the confidence and assurance they need when working with hazardous materials or organisms. By integrating cutting-edge technologies with genuine expertise, the company mitigates risks and maximizes safety in the most critical environments.

Importantly for customers, the company has strategically distributed its engineers across the United Kingdom to ensure that clients from every corner of the nation receive prompt, efficient, and top-tier service.

It is Phillip's expectation that the collaboration between Total Clean Air Limited and GAMBICA will further enhance Total Clean Air's access to industry resources, insights, and expertise, allowing the company to pursue even greater innovation and excellence in the cleanroom and containment sector. In a world where air quality is paramount, Total Clean Air Limited aims to be an unwavering sentinel of purity, ensuring a safer and cleaner world for all its clients.
