

Press release: British built laser spacecraft due to be launched into orbit

Flying at 200 miles above the surface of the Earth, the powerful laser on the European Space Agency's (ESA) Aeolus spacecraft will beam down into the atmosphere and measure wind speeds – a completely new approach that could revolutionise the accuracy of weather forecasting, helping to protect people from disasters like floods and hurricanes across the world.

The spacecraft was built by Airbus Defence and Space in Stevenage. Other British businesses provided critical elements to the mission, including a camera, software and propulsion systems.

The substantial extent of UK participation was achieved through the UK Space Agency's strong, ongoing support of ESA's Earth Observation Envelope Programme, which benefits industry and science.

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

The Aeolus mission is a great example of the potential real-world impacts that space can have on Earth. Its data will lead to more reliable weather forecasts that can be used by farmers, seafarers, construction workers and others to improve productivity and safety.

Space is a key part of our modern Industrial Strategy and it is work like this that shows how vital our role in the European Space Agency is in bringing real benefits to UK companies.

Aeolus is the fifth of ESA's Earth Explorer missions, which address critical Earth science issues, focusing on innovative missions and leading-edge technologies that deliver scientific excellence.

James Cotton, Satellite Winds Scientist, at the Met Office, said:

The Aeolus mission aims to improve the global coverage of wind profile observations, including areas where in situ wind measurements are currently lacking, such as over the oceans, in the tropics and the Southern Hemisphere.

Within numerical weather prediction, we expect the Aeolus winds to be particularly useful for improving our analysis of the atmospheric state in the tropics, a region where we know the model wind errors are large.

Aeolus will lift-off on a Vega rocket from Europe's Spaceport at Kourou in French Guiana this evening (22 August) at 21:20:09, Universal Time (UTC). [The launch will be available to view online.](#)

Colin Paynter, Managing Director Airbus Defence and Space Ltd, said:

The UK contribution to Aeolus, by the alliance of UK SMEs and established players led by Airbus, was first class, delivering a revolutionary Earth observation satellite that will give wind profile data in near real time, improving weather forecasting and helping to bring the benefits of space down to every citizen on Earth. Airbus was honoured to lead Team UK to deliver this spacecraft.

Britain's space industry is going from strength to strength. In 2016 the UK committed €1.4 billion across a range of ESA space programmes. The UK invests around €350 million every year with ESA which gives us access to over €5 billion per year of ESA research and technical expertise. As well as our leading role in Earth Observation, the UK is also the led European funder of telecommunications research which results in one-in-four commercial telecommunications satellites being substantially built in Britain.

The UK Space Agency is driving the growth of the space sector as part of the government's Industrial Strategy with major initiatives including the National Space Test Facility at Harwell, and the UK continues to be a leading member of the European Space Agency, which is independent of the EU.

In July, the government also committed £31.5 million to support the development of a spaceport in Sutherland, Scotland, which could be the first in mainland Europe.

Other UK companies involved in the Aeolus mission are e2v Chelmsford, Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd, Scisys, ABSL and AMPAC.

[Press release: Mark Field visits Cambodia for government and civil society talks](#)

Mark Field, UK Minister of State for Asia & the Pacific, is visiting Cambodia today (22 August) for meetings with the Cambodian government and members of civil society and the private sector.

During calls with the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister

and Education Minister, Mr Field will discuss the recent national election and bilateral ties between the UK and Cambodia.

Speaking ahead of his visit Minister Mark Field said:

I have made clear the UK's view that the Cambodian national elections were neither fair nor credible.

I will hold frank discussions with the Cambodian Prime Minister to urge the government to lift restrictions on political debate and media freedom, and restore the conditions for a proper, functioning democracy.

The Minister will also visit the Halo Trust Cambodia HQ in Siem Reap to meet the dedicated Cambodian de-mining teams, who with UK funding, have released over 70 sq km of land over the last three years, directly benefitting more than 185,000 Cambodians.

Mr Field's visit to Cambodia is part of a six-country tour of Southeast Asia that also includes Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, Thailand and Laos.

Further information

[News story: Government backs ban on third party sales of puppies and kittens](#)

A ban on third party puppy and kitten sales in England will be introduced to help drive up animal welfare standards, the Environment Secretary Michael Gove announced today.

Confirming the government's support for the prominent Lucy's Law campaign, Defra has published [a consultation](#) on an outright ban that will mean anyone looking to buy or adopt a puppy or kitten must either deal directly with the breeder or with one of the nation's many animal rehoming centres.

The steps follow a commitment by the Prime Minister Theresa May in December to crack down on cruel puppy farms, and aim to bring an end to the grisly conditions found in puppy farming and tackle a range of existing animal welfare issues.

These include the early separation of puppies and kittens from their mothers, their introduction to new and unfamiliar environments and the increased likelihood of multiple journeys the puppies or kittens have to undertake. All

of which can contribute to a chaotic start in life and lead to serious health problems and lack of socialisation.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove, said:

A ban on third party sales will ensure the nation's much-loved pets get the right start in life. I pay tribute to the Lucy's Law campaign, spearheaded by PupAid, Care And Respect Includes All Dogs (CARIAD), and Canine Action UK, who have fought tirelessly for this step.

People who have a complete disregard for pet welfare will no longer be able to profit from this miserable trade.

The proposed ban on third party sales is part of a series of government reforms on pet welfare including banning the sale of underage puppies and kittens and tackling the breeding of dogs with severe genetic disorders. New laws come into force on 1 October this year banning licensed sellers from dealing in puppies and kittens under the age of eight weeks and tightening the compulsory licensing of anyone in the business of breeding and selling dogs.

As part its animal welfare reform programme, the Government is also bringing in higher maximum sentences of up to five years for animal abusers – the toughest sentencing in Europe.

Puppies and kittens are defined as being less than six months old.

Press release: Address serious governance failures, RSPCA leaders are warned

The Charity Commission has issued the RSPCA with an Official Warning, after finding that a group of trustees ("officers") failed to ensure they were sufficiently informed before making a settlement offer to the charity's former acting chief executive.

The Commission also found those trustees failed to act with reasonable care and skill in negotiating with that former executive.

In May, it was reported that the RSPCA's former interim chief executive received a significant pay-out from the charity, prompting the Commission to examine the trustees' decision making.

The Commission's warning is critical of the trustees for not ensuring that the decision was properly made, particularly given the large sum of money involved.

The Warning concludes that these failings amount to mismanagement in the administration of the charity.

The Commission says it is vital that the RSPCA, an institution performing important functions, can demonstrate the highest standards of governance. But the regulator has had significant engagement with the RSPCA in recent years regarding the charity's governance.

It says the level of its engagement has been concerning considering the charity's size and importance. The RSPCA has seen unusually high turnover among its chief executives, and significant periods of time without a substantive chief executive in post.

David Holdsworth, Registrar of Charities for England and Wales and Deputy Chief Executive of the Charity Commission, says:

The RSPCA is a much-loved national institution performing a crucial role in animal protection, with its staff and volunteers undertaking vital work. The public, and the RSPCA's many members and supporters, need it to succeed and to deliver important benefits for society. They rightly expect that it should be run by its trustees to the highest standards.

Unfortunately, that has not been the case and the charity's governance has fallen short which has led to people asking legitimate questions about the pay-out to the former executive.

Issuing an Official Warning signals to the trustees that we expect them to resolve this important issue and take immediate steps to improve the charity's governance.

The recent election of a new Council, the introduction of a new code of conduct and the recruitment of a new chief executive, provide an opportunity for a fresh start for the charity. The trustees must now show leadership, and work with the new chief executive in driving forward the required improvements in governance.

The use of our formal legal powers is a significant step, and not one we take lightly. I hope that the trustees use it as an opportunity to work constructively with the RSPCA's new chief executive and to show to their members, supporters and the wider public that they are committed to good and effective governance.

If the trustees are not able to satisfy us that they have responded meaningfully and promptly to our Official Warning, we will not hesitate to take further regulatory action.

Speaking on the wider issue of governance in charities, David Holdsworth added:

Good governance in charities is not an optional extra, or a bureaucratic detail. Good governance is what underpins the delivery of a charity's purposes to the high standards expected by the public.

Charities that operate with their purpose at the core of all they do, and underpin this with robust governance and the highest standards of conduct will serve their beneficiaries better. Conversely, where we find weak governance, we are more likely to find a charity that is failing to meet its charitable potential.

So good governance should be a priority for all trustees, especially those involved in important national institutions.

The Official Warning sets out actions the Commission recommends the charity takes to address its concerns. Among the steps set out are that there should be formal training for RSPCA Council members to ensure they are fully aware of their responsibilities as charity trustees, and ensuring the RSPCA's council adheres to the charity's code of conduct.

The Commission also says the trustees should implement the recommendation of an independent report, commissioned by the charity, into the processes followed in recruiting and appointing a new chief executive.

The regulator's [published guidance on its power to issue an Official Warning](#) notes that trustees' failure to rectify breaches specified in a warning would be grounds for it to take more serious regulatory action, for example using its powers to suspend trustees or appoint an interim manager.

The Commission notified the RSPCA of its intention to issue the warning in June, and before the charity's new chief executive took up post on 1 August 2018. The Commission has welcomed the appointment of a permanent chief executive and urged the trustees to work with him to improve the charity's governance and management.

ENDS

1. The power to issue charities with an Official Warning was granted by the Charities Act 2016. It is designed to ensure a charity or its trustees know that a breach, misconduct or mismanagement has taken place and that it needs to be rectified.
2. An official warning is not a statutory direction. The Commission cannot use an official warning to direct trustees to take specific action. However, it must specify any action it considers the trustees or the charity should take to rectify the breach, misconduct or mismanagement. Furthermore, failure to remedy any breach specified in a warning can be used as evidence of misconduct or mismanagement including when

considering whether to exercise other specified powers.

[News story: Government backs ban on third party sales of puppies and kittens](#)

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