

News story: F-35 jets use new vertical landing pads at RAF Marham for the first time

To support the aircraft's short take off vertical landing (STOVL) capability, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation is building three VLPs through its contractors, a joint venture between Galliford Try and Lagan Construction, at RAF Marham. The Norfolk site is the Main Operating Base for the F-35 in the UK.

The F-35's STOVL capability will provide operational flexibility including landing on the Royal Navy's new Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers. Initial flight trials of the F-35 Lightning aircraft from HMS Queen Elizabeth are on track for 2018, allowing a coherent build-up towards delivering a carrier strike capability for the UK from 2020.

Construction presented a significant engineering challenge. Due to standard concrete not being suitable, the design team had to source special materials from Germany to make a concrete which has the ability to withstand the high temperatures created by aircraft engines. Without this there would be a risk of cracking which in turn could present significant risk to the aircraft. This was the first time this material has been used outside the USA and required a rigorous testing process to ensure the landing pads were fit for purpose.

Lt Col Ian Jenkins, Defence Infrastructure Organisation Project Manager for the VLPs, said:

Vertical landing is a really exciting military capability and from an infrastructure perspective it's been fascinating to be involved in the design and construction process. It was really exciting and rewarding to see an F-35 landing on the first vertical landing pad to be finished and I look forward to seeing more as we continue to work on other infrastructure upgrades required for the F-35s.

Each landing pad measures 67m long and 67m wide, with a central landing area of 30.5m by 30.5m. Four F-35B Lightning aircraft arrived at their new home at RAF Marham on 6 June this year, starting the build-up of the newly-reformed 617 Squadron in the UK. The successful first use of these new VLPs is another step closer towards successfully reaching Initial Operating Capability for the UK by the end of the year.

In addition to its short take off and vertical landing capability, the F-35B's unique combination of stealth, cutting-edge radar, sensor technology, and electronic warfare systems bring all of capabilities of a fifth-generation fighter.

[Press release: Man jailed for throwing drugs into Bristol Prison after Solicitor General's referral](#)

A man caught providing drugs to Bristol Prison has had his sentence increased after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, referred it to the Court of Appeal for being too low.

Jason Weeks, 26, was stopped by police after CCTV caught him throwing drugs over the prison wall into the exercise yard from a vehicle. When searched, more drugs were found in the vehicle, as well as at Weeks' home, where he was also growing cannabis.

Between those drugs thrown into the prison, in the vehicle, and those found at his home, Weeks was responsible for over 1.5kg of cannabis and synthetic cannabinoids.

Weeks was originally sentenced at Bristol Crown Court in May, where he was sentenced to 16 months' imprisonment suspended for 24 months. Today, after the Solicitor General's referral, the Court of Appeal increased his sentence to 15 months immediate custody, with the one month reduction due to recent progress he has made.

Commenting on the imprisonment, the Solicitor General said:

"Weeks risked seriously undermining the important role Bristol Prison plays in many of its inmates' rehabilitation, in particular the work they do to address substance misuse. I am pleased that the Court of Appeal has today agreed to increase his sentence to show that crimes of this nature will not be tolerated."

[Press release: Poultry keepers urged to be vigilant of Newcastle Disease](#)

Poultry keepers across the United Kingdom have been urged to be vigilant of [Newcastle Disease](#) following reported cases in flocks across Europe.

Recent cases in Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg have led to [Animal and Plant Health Agency \(APHA\)](#) experts to advise that the risk of the disease in UK flocks has risen from 'low' to 'medium'.

Newcastle Disease is caused by a virulent strain of paramyxovirus and can be spread through direct contact with the bodily fluids of infected birds. It can cause severe losses in certain poultry species, including:

- commercial and specialist breeds
- pet chickens
- other captive birds, including racing pigeons.

[Public Health England](#) advises the risk of Newcastle Disease affecting people is very low.

Christine Middlemiss, UK Chief Veterinary Officer, said:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency experts have advised that the risk of disease has risen to 'medium' following reports of Newcastle Disease in mainland Europe.

I urge all poultry keepers – whether of commercial, smallholder flocks or specialist breeds or pet chickens – to remain vigilant to the clinical signs of this disease, and urge them to put in place strong biosecurity measures to ensure the health and welfare of their birds.

Poultry species that are affected by Newcastle Disease may show the following clinical signs:

- Respiratory distress, such as gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling and rattling
- Nervous behaviour, such as tremors, paralysis and twisting of the neck
- Unusually watery faeces that are yellowish-green in colour
- Depression and a lack of appetite
- Produce fewer eggs which could be misshapen and soft-shelled

If a bird keeper suspects that their birds may be infected with Newcastle Disease, they should contact their private vet and the APHA immediately.

There are several precautions poultry keepers can follow to further minimise the risk to their birds, including:

- Ensuring, where appropriate, their birds have been vaccinated against the disease.
- Implementing strict biosecurity measures on their premises, including using disinfectant foot baths and reducing visitors to the birds.
- Thoroughly cleaning vehicles, equipment, clothing, boots that have been in contact with birds.
- Feeding and watering should be under cover and kept away from wild birds.
- Washing their hands with soap and water after handling their own birds.

For APHA contact details visit [here](#)

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Press release: Meat cleaver wielding Somerset shoplifter ordered into immediate custody

A man who robbed a convenience store with a meat cleaver to pay for his drug habit has had his sentence increased after the Attorney General's Office referred it to the Court of Appeal for being too low.

On 8 February 2018, Stephen Brennan, 32, entered a convenience store in Yeovil with a meat cleaver. He placed the cleaver on the counter and demanded the female cashier give him money. Although Brennan wore a hood, the cashier recognised him by his accent as someone who had been banned from the premises, and told him to leave.

Eventually Brennan did exit the store, taking three bottles of wine on his way out. Although the financial loss to the store was minimal, the crime has had a lasting effect on the cashier.

Brennan was originally sentenced at Taunton Crown Court in May, where he was given a 3 year Community Order, drug rehabilitation requirements, and a restraining order from the convenience store. Today, after the hearing, the Court of Appeal increased his sentence to 3 years 6 months' imprisonment and imposed a victim surcharge.

Speaking after the hearing, Attorney General Geoffrey Cox QC MP said:

"In order to pay for his addictions, Brennan subjected a woman to a traumatic experience which has had a lasting effect on both her work and home life. I am now satisfied that justice has been done thanks to the Court of Appeal's decision today."