

News story: Sentinel-5P successfully launched to monitor world's pollution

Sentinel-5 Precursor is an important satellite for the joint European Commission–ESA Copernicus programme – which monitors the atmosphere to help us understand the spread of key pollutants and their impact on our changing planet.

The satellite, which was launched on a Rockot from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome in Russia at 10.37am BST, shows how important the UK contribution is to European space programmes.

Science Minister, Jo Johnson, said:

“The successful launch of the Sentinel-5 Precursor satellite is a clear demonstration of the UK’s valuable contribution to improving global knowledge through satellite data, and the heights we can reach by collaborating with our European partners.

“Our ongoing investment in the UK space sector forms a key part of our Industrial Strategy, and we are committed to ensuring that we have the infrastructure and skills in place to support our ambition to capture 10% of the global space market by 2030.”

The UK provides investment into the Copernicus programme through the European Union as well as additional UK Space Agency investment through the European Space Agency for the development of the Sentinel satellite technology and instruments. Defra are the lead department for Copernicus, championing the use of the Copernicus satellite data for government policy making, scientific research and commercial services.

Graham Turnock, CEO of the UK Space Agency, with sixth form students from Drapers Academy in Romford who were invited by the UK Space Agency to the launch event in London.

Sentinel-5 Precursor features the TROPOMI (TROPOspheric Monitoring Instrument) instrument, developed by Airbus DS Netherlands for the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Netherlands Space Office. TROPOMI will measure ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, methane and other atmospheric pollutants at a higher resolution than previous instruments. Having more accurate atmospheric data will enable improved climate models and pollutant tracking and forecasting.

Professor John Remedios, Director of the National Centre for Earth Observation, who attended a launch event at the European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC) in the Netherlands, along with a panel of experts from the UK, said:

“Sentinel-5P and successor satellites will give the public a consistent measure of the quality of our atmosphere over the next decades and monitor

the success of the really significant steps society wants to take towards a healthier lifestyle and clean economy. It is encouraging to see the excellent UK participation with its expertise in this mission.”