

News story: Space Climate Observatory agreed ahead of One Planet Summit in Paris

Artist's impression of MicroCarb. Credit: ESA.

At an event in Paris, the UK Space Agency signed up to the global agreement to improve long-term sustainability and accessibility of climate data captured by satellites.

The Heads of the national Space Agencies have committed to implementing the Space Climate Observatory and working together on activities such as increasing observations of key climate variables and validating the data – which the UK's world leading climate community is well placed to deliver.

Space agencies have also agreed to promote free and open data policies as well as satellite data products that can be used by scientists, businesses and governments all over the world. Data from satellites operated by different organisations will be brought together, alongside tools to model, validate and calibrate the measurements they make.

Science Minister Jo Johnson said:

“The Government is committed to tackling climate change while growing our economy, and the space sector will play a vital role in driving clean growth as part of the Industrial Strategy.

“This new agreement recognises the importance of satellite observations and highlights the vital role UK science and industry can play in delivering solutions to global issues.”

Climate Change and Industry Minister Claire Perry said:

“The UK is a world leader in tackling climate change and we want to help other countries do the same. We played a vital role in the formation of the historic Paris Agreement, and the One Planet Summit marks two years to the day since its adoption.

“This global commitment to improve climate data captured by satellites demonstrates the UK's leadership and excellence in research and development, and shows that there is no rowing back on the Paris Agreement.”

The UK Space Agency recently announced an investment in a satellite mission called MicroCarb in partnership with the French space agency CNES. The satellite, which measures carbon emissions and absorption by the cities, oceans and forests, is being assembled and tested in the UK by Thales Alenia Space and is due to launch in 2020. The UK is providing world leading climate scientists to the mission team and the UK Space Agency will support the

delivery of a number instrument sub-systems from UK institutions.

The UK has a long history of working collaboratively with international organisations such as the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) and the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) to maximise the benefits of earth observation from space.

The UK Space Agency runs a satellite instrument technology programme that is building capability and expertise in monitoring the planet from space, funding a number of instruments and projects. The UK Earth Observation Technology Strategy published in November, outlines how the UK will develop innovative technology to drive growth and leadership in the area, with £3.4 million of funding currently available for new projects.

Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency Graham Turnock, who signed the agreement in Paris, said: "The UK is working with international organisations to encourage the use of space data and technology to tackling climate change.

"It's important we come together and agree to work towards improving the quality and sustainability of climate data from space and ensuring it is made freely available to researchers around the world."

The One Planet Summit, convened by the French Government, the UN and World Bank, is taking place in Paris on 12 December to mark two years since the adoption of the Paris Agreement and increase access to finance for climate action. The Powering Past Coal Alliance, which was recently launched by the UK and Canada to bring together countries, public bodies and businesses to phase out coal in the power sector, is expected to be discussed further at the summit.