

Press release: HRH The Princess Royal officially opens new UKHO headquarters in Taunton

During her visit, The Princess Royal delivered a speech to an audience of UKHO staff and over 100 guests who gathered from across the world to celebrate the landmark occasion. In her speech, she commended the UKHO for the vital role it plays in supporting maritime navigation, safety, security, and marine development around the UK and worldwide.

The Rt Hon Earl Howe, Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Minister of State for Defence, was also in attendance. He addressed guests to speak of the UKHO's long and successful history of supplying navigation services to shipping companies around the world, as well as its continued contribution to defence and the long-term prosperity of the UK and its allies around the world.

The new building is designed to provide an open and dynamic workspace for the UKHO's 850 staff, whilst fostering a culture of collaboration and smarter ways of working through the use of cutting-edge technologies. These state-of-the-art facilities, together with continued investment in new technology and talent, present opportunities for the UKHO to broaden its range of services as a provider of marine geospatial data.

Representatives from 18 countries, spanning five continents, attended the ceremony. Guests at the event included dignitaries from the local community, academics, data suppliers, distributors, and members of the Armed Forces and international hydrographic community.

After the opening speeches, guests were given a tour of the new facilities, which include a high-spec office space, gym, staff restaurant, and an 800 square metre central atrium designed to provide maximum levels of natural daylight throughout the building.

Commenting on the formal opening of the new build, Rear Admiral Tim Lowe CBE, National Hydrographer and Acting Chief Executive, UKHO, said:

It is an honour to welcome Her Royal Highness and guests from around the world here today to share this momentous occasion with us as we officially open our new headquarters here in Taunton.

Today doesn't simply mark the opening of a new building. For us, it marks the beginning of the next chapter in this organisation's long and proud history. It is the next step in the transformation that the UKHO has been undertaking in recent years to become a truly modern marine geospatial information agency and hydrographic office.

The UKHO's new home has been specifically designed to meet our needs as a modern hydrographic office. Its conception, design and construction are just some of the physical reflections of our ambition to drive the advancement of ocean science in the UK and across the globe; strengthening our position as a world-leading marine geospatial agency and completing our transformation into a digital-first, data-centric provider of marine geospatial information services.

Amy Carrillo, Head of People, UKHO, added:

The new building is a huge source of pride for our 850 staff here at the UKHO. With its open and dynamic design, we have created a truly world-leading workspace for our people that cultivates creativity and innovation across the organisation.

From hydrography and oceanography, to software engineering and data science, we employ experts from across a range of disciplines, in a variety of challenging and interesting roles. The new environment celebrates and reinforces our strong links with the local community, and will support us as we continue to invest in our technology and our people.

Our staff are answering some of the most difficult challenges facing our oceans, and we are confident that this new building will underpin our world-leading geospatial expertise for years to come.