

Press release: Earthquakes on Mars

A new mission to Mars involving UK science will be the first to study the heart of the Red Planet and measure 'Marsquakes' from its surface.

The NASA InSight mission, which stands for Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport, is due to launch from California aboard a United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket at 12.05pm (BST) today (Saturday 5 May).

The InSight Lander will use cutting-edge instruments to delve beneath the surface and investigate the interior of Mars to improve our understanding of how such planets formed. It will also study tectonic activity and meteorite impacts, both of which could provide valuable knowledge about these events on Earth.

The UK Space Agency has invested £4 million in one of the key instruments onboard; the short period Seismometer (SEIS-SP). This will be on the surface of Mars to measure seismic waves from Marsquakes. Scientists expect to detect anywhere between a dozen and a hundred of these tremors up to 6.0 on the Richter scale over the course of two years.

Sam Gyimah, Science Minister, said:

The UK is playing an important role in this exciting mission to unlock the deepest secrets of our nearest neighbour in the solar system. An instrument that started life in a London university laboratory will end it on the surface of Mars detecting quakes and meteor strikes for the first time.

It's a great example of the importance of international collaboration and our work with the space sector as part of our Industrial Strategy, to ensure the UK remains at the forefront of pioneering science and exploration.

Prof Tom Pike from Imperial College London is leading a team with Dr Simon Calcutt from Oxford University and support from STFC RAL Space, to the work on SEIS-SP.

Prof Tom Pike said:

It's been enormously challenging to put together such a small sensor with the performance we need to detect Marsquakes. We've had the support of the UK Space Agency, and their considerable patience. Now we finally get to see our microseismometers leave the launch pad, next stop Mars.

The spacecraft is due to arrive on the surface of Mars on 26 November. The mission will conduct six science investigations on and below the surface of Mars to uncover the evolutionary history that shaped all of the rocky planets in the inner solar system.

The UK instrument will work together with seismometers from France, as well as major contributions from Switzerland, Germany and the US. Other instruments on board include RISE, a precision radio tracking of the lander that can determine the direction and motion of the rotation of Mars and the HP3 (Heat Flow and Physical Properties Probe) which will study heat flow by embedding a temperature sensor under the surface of Mars.

The UK space sector is playing a leading role in efforts to explore the solar system with additional collaborative projects including the ExoMars mission which will search for evidence of life on Mars using a rover on the surface and a spacecraft in orbit above it. The rover is designed and built in Britain by Airbus for launch in 2020 and the spacecraft recently returned the first photos from its new orbit showing an ice-filled, Martian crater.

The UK Space Agency, University of Leicester and Airbus are also involved in a mission to the closest planet to the Sun, Mercury, called BepiColombo, which is due to launch later this year.

The InSight launch will be [streamed live by NASA](#)

Press release: Dstl analysts support Europe's largest military exercise

A team of analytic specialists from Dstl are providing vital analysis to support military commanders in Europe's largest military exercise, Exercise Joint Warrior. Lead by the UK's Ministry of Defence (MOD), Exercise Joint Warrior is a multi-national military training exercise which takes place in the UK, predominately in the north-west of Scotland and on Salisbury Plain.

Dstl's guidance is crucial for military leaders to understand the risks and benefits of the decisions they make when planning tactical activities and maneuvers during conflict.

Thousands of military personnel take part in the exercise from across the UK services, as well as those from NATO and other allied countries. It involves 38 naval vessels, 68 aircraft and a large number ground units. Operations include airborne assaults, amphibious landing and training in counter-insurgency, counter-piracy and interstate warfare.

Among the team of analysts from Dstl is Richard Hoyes, he said:

Seeing your hard work and analysis influence a commander's decisions is great; though, clearly there is a serious edge to all of the work involved; it is also good fun. At the start of the exercise I was in an airfield with hundreds of paratroopers who were prepping to deploy as per a real conflict. There were a lot of helicopters and fast jets; it all makes for a very meaningful and realistic experience.

The team is among more than 30 members of Dstl staff who are trained and ready to deploy anywhere in the world in support of military operations and exercises; all at a moment's notice.

Richard added:

On this joint operation, the Army, RAF and Navy work together as a team. You can gain great insight into a breadth of capabilities due to the fascinating mix of cultures with the likes of Danish, Lithuanian and Latvians among the nationalities working alongside UK personnel. This is the second exercise of this type that I have done and I have already developed working relations with other nations. It shows how seamlessly these nations can integrate together and fight side by side.

Dstl also has a 24-hour, 365-day 'reachback' capability, which provides rapid access to the breadth and depth of Dstl's capabilities in support of military operations, not just with analysis but could include anything from computer modelling and highly detailed scientific advice to a review of previous research studies for similar issues.

For more information contact the Dstl press office on 01980 956845 or at press@dstl.gov.uk

[News story: VMD survey: The Disposal of Controlled Drugs](#)

The VMD is carrying out a survey on the disposal of controlled drugs. Our aim is to understand the extent of the problem vets face when getting controlled drugs witnessed for disposal.

[VMD Controlled Drugs Survey](#)

At present vets must destroy schedule 2 controlled drugs in the presence of

and directed by any of the following:

- an inspector appointed under the Veterinary Medicines Regulations
- a vet, independent of the practice where the destruction takes place
- a person legally authorised to witness the destruction of CD such as a Police CD Liaison Officer (CDLO)

We note that there is a shortage of Police CDLOs, alongside inspectors not being in the area and no independent vets within close proximity, therefore have commissioned this survey.

By answering the survey, you will help the VMD establish the extent of this problem around the UK and inform any future possible policy development.

The survey is open until 6 June 2018, is voluntary and open to all UK registered vets. It should not take any longer than 15 minutes to complete. Please note no personal data is being collected, however all data will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Published data will be anonymised and aggregated.

The VMD legislation team is responsible for conducting this survey and can be contacted on 01932 338316 or controlleddrugssurvey@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk

The VMD would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, further guidance on [controlled drugs](#) is available.

[Press release: Governments agree plans to work together on UK frameworks](#)

The ninth Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) met today in 70 Whitehall. The meeting was chaired by the Rt Hon David Lidington MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office.

The attending Ministers were:

From the UK Government: the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, Rt Hon David Lidington MP; the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, Rt Hon David Davis MP; the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP; the Secretary of State for Wales, Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP; the Secretary of State for Scotland, Rt Hon David Mundell MP; the Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP; the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, Robin Walker MP.

From the Welsh Government: the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford AM.

From the Scottish Government: the Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's

Place in Europe, Michael Russell MSP.

Dr Andrew McCormick, Director General International Relations from the Northern Ireland Civil Service attended the meeting in the continued absence of a Northern Ireland Executive.

The Chair opened the meeting by summarising the constructive Ministerial and official level engagement that had taken place since the Committee last met.

The Secretary of State for Exiting the EU provided an update on negotiations, including the March meeting of European Council and the agreement reached on the terms of the Implementation Period. The Committee discussed the UK Government's paper on the Devolved Administrations' role in the negotiations. The Committee noted this paper.

The Committee discussed the EU (Withdrawal) Bill.

The Committee noted the need for continued engagement on common frameworks and agreed plans for the next phase of multilateral official level discussions in a range of areas where frameworks may be required, with progress to be considered at the next meeting.

[Press release: Government action to end letting fees](#)

Unexpected letting fees and high deposits can cause a significant affordability problem for tenants and are often not clearly explained – leaving many residents unaware of the true costs of renting a property.

Introduced into Parliament today (2 May 2018), the [Tenant Fees Bill](#) will bring an end to costly letting fees and save tenants around £240 million a year, according to government figures.

The Bill will also give tenants greater assurances that the deposit they pay at the start of the tenancy cannot exceed 6 weeks' rent.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

This government is determined to build a housing market fit for the future. Tenants across the country should not be stung by unexpected costs.

That's why we're delivering our promise to ban letting fees, alongside other measures to make renting fairer and more transparent.

The Tenant Fees Bill will stop letting agents from exploiting their position as intermediaries between landlords and tenants, and prevent unfair practices such as double charging for the same services.

It will also help to increase competition between agents and landlords, which could help drive lower costs overall and a higher quality of service for tenants.

Other key measures in the Bill, which reflects feedback from a recent public consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny from the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee, include:

- capping holding deposits at no more than one week's rent. The Bill also sets out the proposed requirements on landlords and agents to return a holding deposit to a tenant
- capping the amount that can be charged for a change to tenancy at £50 unless the landlord demonstrates that greater costs were incurred
- creating a financial penalty with a fine of £5,000 for an initial breach of the ban with a criminal offence where a person has been fined or convicted of the same offence within the last 5 years. Financial penalties of up to £30,000 can be issued as an alternative to prosecution
- requiring Trading Standards to enforce the ban and to make provision for tenants to be able to recover unlawfully charged fees via the First-tier Tribunal
- prevents landlords from recovering possession of their property via the section 21 Housing Act 1988 procedure until they have repaid any unlawfully charged fees
- enabling the appointment of a lead enforcement authority in the lettings sector
- amending the Consumer Rights Act 2015 to specify that the letting agent transparency requirements should apply to property portals such as Rightmove and Zoopla
- local authorities will be able to retain the money raised through financial penalties with this money reserved for future local housing enforcement

Alongside rent and deposits, agents and landlords will only be permitted to

charge tenants fees associated with:

- a change or early termination of a tenancy when requested by the tenant
- utilities, communication services and Council Tax
- payments arising from a default by the tenant such as replacing lost key

The new measures are subject to Parliamentary timetables and will be introduced in law next year.

The Tenant Fees Bill builds on government's work this year to protect tenants and landlords through the introduction of new rogue landlord database, banning orders for rogue landlords and property agents as well as a new code of practice to regulate the letting and managing agents sector.

Further information

All proposals relate to England only. The ban on letting fees will apply to assured shorthold tenancies and licences to occupy in the private rented sector.

A ban on letting fees was announced at Autumn Statement 2016, it was also a commitment in the 2017 Conservative Manifesto.

The Tenant Fees Bill reflects feedback from the recent [public consultation](#), which ran from April to June 2017 and received over 4,700 responses. 58% of respondents (93% of tenants) agreed with government's proposed approach to ban letting fees to tenants with the exception of a holding deposit, refundable tenancy deposit and tenant default fees.

A [draft Tenant Fees Bill](#) was published by government on 1 November 2017 and underwent pre-legislative scrutiny by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee who published their [report](#) on 29 March 2018.

The Committee agreed that the Bill has the potential to save tenants in the private rented sector hundreds of pounds as well as making the market more transparent. Government has carefully considered the Select Committee's report and accepted the majority of their recommendations. Read the [government response](#) to the Select Committee report.

Office address and general enquiries

2 Marsham Street

London
SW1P 4DF

Contact form
<http://forms.communiti...>

General enquiries: please use this number if you are a member of the public

030 3444 0000

Media enquiries

Email

newsdesk@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Please use this number if you're a journalist wishing to speak to Press Office

0303 444 1209

Social media – MHCLG

Twitter – <https://twitter.com/mhclg>

Flickr – <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mhclg>

LinkedIn – <http://www.linkedin.com/company/mhclg>