

# MOD signs £65 million contract for Protector aircraft

After a successful development phase Protector is set to enter service by mid-2024, meaning that the Remotely Piloted Air System (RPAS) will deliver a step-change in capability for the RAF.

Protector is the world's first certified RPAS, enabling it to fly in busy, unsegregated airspace, including civilian airspace, thanks to its ground-breaking 'detect and avoid' technology.

The contract was announced by Defence Secretary Ben Wallace at the virtual 2020 Air and Space Power Conference.

## **Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:**

The UK is proving once again that we are a world leader in defence technology. Protector will provide the RAF with vast global reach, meeting the UK's defence and security needs for decades to come, and provides another increase to the unmanned inventory for the Armed Forces.

This aircraft will upgrade a whole range of lethal capabilities allowing us to control, protect and manage the battlespace from the air for hours on end.

The cutting-edge aircraft, which will replace the current Reaper RPAS force, will be deployed in wide-ranging Intelligence, Surveillance, Targeting and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) operations from its base at RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire.

Its ability to fly consistently for up to 40 hours will offer the RAF vastly improved armed intelligence and reconnaissance sorties.

The innovative fleet will also have advanced anti-icing and lightning protection, providing the RAF with unprecedented flexibility to operate in extreme weather conditions.

Protector also comes with enhanced data links and will carry next-generation, low collateral, precision strike weapons – the UK-made Brimstone missile (MBDA) and Paveway IV Laser Guided Bomb (Raytheon UK).

The contract follows a successful development phase by manufacturers General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. which will build the first three Protector aircraft, plus three ground control stations and other associated support equipment.

It also includes an option to build 13 more aircraft and four ground control

stations, which will complete the current planned fleet of 16 aircraft, more than doubling the capability currently provided by Reaper.

**Sir Simon Bollom, CEO of Defence Equipment and Support, said:**

I am delighted to announce that we have got Protector production on contract. The DE&S team have demonstrated their remarkable resilience and overcome considerable challenges to ensure this significant programme remained on track.

Their efforts and the collaborative commitment from industry means that the RAF can still look forward to the delivery of the cutting-edge Protector and the step-change in capability that it brings.

Meeting stringent NATO and UK safety certification standards, the aircraft could, if requested, operate in civilian airspace to support civilian agencies in the UK, for example, in search and rescue and disaster response missions.

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## [PM call with Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority: 14 July 2020](#)

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority.



The Prime Minister spoke to Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority this evening.

He reiterated the UK's commitment to the two state solution and our

opposition to annexation proposals in the West Bank.

The Prime Minister urged President Abbas to engage in negotiations and offered the UK's support to foster dialogue.

The leaders agreed to continue to work together on this issue and others.

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## [Ceasefire violations on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan](#)

Press release

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) calls on Armenia and Azerbaijan to end ceasefire violations and engage in dialogue.



An FCO spokesperson said:

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned by recent ceasefire violations on the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and greatly regrets the loss of life.

We call on both sides to respect the ceasefire and engage in dialogue to de-escalate the situation and avoid further casualties.

We urge both sides to show restraint and refrain from rhetoric that may increase tensions further.

We reiterate our support for the negotiation process facilitated by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group aimed at securing a peaceful settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The continued violence threatens regional stability and prosperity, and highlights the urgent need for formal negotiations to resume.

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## [Face coverings to be mandatory in shops and supermarkets from 24 July](#)

Thank you very much Mr Deputy Speaker, and with permission, I would like to make a statement about coronavirus.

Thanks to one of the greatest national efforts in peace time, this deadly virus continues to diminish.

Yesterday's figures show 530 new cases, down 90% since the peak.

162 patients are currently in mechanical ventilator beds with coronavirus – down around 95% since the peak.

The latest number of deaths recorded in all settings across the UK is 11 – the lowest figure since 13 March.

And according to today's ONS data, for the third consecutive week, total deaths are lower than normal for this time of year.

Due to this substantial progress, we have been able to restore freedoms and carefully and methodically restore the fabric of this country.

However, we cannot let our progress today lead to complacency tomorrow and so we must remain vigilant to keep this virus under control.

Our strategy is to protect the NHS, get the virus down, and keep the virus down, while restoring as much of normal life as possible and our tactic is to replace national lockdown with ever more targeted local action as we work hard to defeat this virus once and for all.

Our NHS Test and Trace system gets stronger all the time and since launch 6 weeks ago, 144,000 people have now been asked to self-isolate, who otherwise simply wouldn't have known that they had to.

Where we find clusters or outbreaks we take local action – tackling over 100 incidents a week. Mostly these are small, in an individual care home, or pub, or factory. But we are also prepared to take action on a wider basis if that's what it takes, just as we did in Leicester.

Four permanent test sites and 10 Mobile Testing Units have been deployed across the city, meaning that Leicester now has the highest rate of testing in the country.

We have launched one of the biggest communications programmes that Leicester has ever seen – including targeted social media posts, website banners, radio ads, billboards and even bin stickers. And we have been working closely with all parts of the local community, including community leaders, local businesses, and the local football and cricket clubs, to get the message out.

We've also established a process for making decisions to lift the lockdown, with the first decision point later this week.

Mr Deputy Speaker, local action is one way in which we control the spread of the virus, while minimising the economic and social costs.

Another is to minimise the risk as we return more to normality. In recent weeks, we have reopened retail and footfall is rising. We want to give people more confidence to shop safely, and enhance protections for those who work in shops.

Both of these can be done by the use of face coverings. Sadly, sales assistants, cashiers and security guards have suffered disproportionately in this crisis.

The death rate of sales and retail assistants is 75% higher among men, and 60% higher among women than in the general population. So as we restore shopping, so we must keep our shopkeepers safe.

There is also evidence that face coverings increase confidence in people to shop.

The British Retail Consortium has said that together with other social distancing measures, face coverings can make shoppers feel even more confident about returning to the high street. And the Chair of the Federation of Small Businesses has said that small firms know that mandatory face coverings have a part to play, and I quote, "in the nation's recovery both physically and financially"... And that he is "sure this [measure] will be welcomed".

We have therefore come to the decision that face coverings should be mandatory in shops and supermarkets.

Last month, we made face coverings mandatory on public transport and in NHS settings.

This has been successful in giving people more confidence to go on public transport and to a hospital setting when they need to.

Providing people with additional protection when they are not able to keep 2 metres from others, particularly people they do not normally come into contact with.

Under the new rules, people who do not wear a face covering will face a fine of up to £100, in line with the sanction on public transport and just as with public transport, children under 11 and those with certain disabilities will be exempt.

The liability for wearing a face covering lies with the individual.

Should an individual without an exemption refuse to wear a face covering, a shop can refuse them entry and can call the police if people refuse to comply, the police have the formal enforcement powers and can issue a fine.

This is in line with how shops would normally manage their customers and enforcement is of course a last resort, and we fully expect the public to comply with the rules as they have done throughout the pandemic.

I want to give this message to everyone who has been making vital changes to their daily lives, for the greater good.

Wearing a face covering does not mean that we can ignore the other measures that have been so important in slowing the spread of this virus.

Washing your hands. Following the rules on social distancing and just as the British people have acted so selflessly throughout this pandemic, I have no doubt they will rise to this once more.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as a nation, we have made huge strides in getting this virus, which has brought grief to so many, under control.

We are not out of the woods yet.

So let's all of us do our utmost to keep this virus cornered, and enjoy summer safely.

And I commend this statement to the House.

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## [New blueprint to protect and prepare nation from flooding](#)

A new plan to better protect and prepare millions of homes and businesses from the risk of flooding that the climate emergency will bring in the future has been launched today (Tuesday 14 July) by the Environment Agency (EA).

With more extreme weather expected, including summer temperatures up to 7.4°C hotter and 59% more rainfall by 2050, the new [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy](#) sets out how we will build up the resilience of millions more homes and businesses as part of the EA's green recovery plan into the next decade.

More than 5.2 million properties in England are already at risk, and climate change will lead to even more people being affected.

The measures are set to include:

- Expanded flood warnings by 2022 to all at risk properties, with 62,000 more families to be added to the service
- Increased investment in natural flood management schemes to better protect communities, tackle climate change and create new wildlife habitats
- Further promote the use of property flood resilience measures to help homeowners and businesses build back better and recover quicker after flooding
- More collaborative partnerships with national road, rail and utilities providers to ensure their investments are flood resilient and benefit the public

Environment Agency Chair, Emma Howard Boyd said:

This year we had major flooding and the sunniest spring on record in rapid succession. We know climate change is going to bounce us between these extremes more and more in the coming years, but communities wouldn't want us to hermetically seal them off from the weather even if we could.

This strategy will help answer local concerns, prepare the nation for future shocks and enable greater international leadership at COP26 by showing we can walk the walk at home.

The clean, green recovery of the economy from coronavirus must have nature at its heart. This is a blueprint for using the natural world to build back better so that homes, businesses and infrastructure are more resilient.

The Strategy comes on the same day the [government announced details of the £5.2 billion that will be spent on flood protection between 2021 and 2027](#), alongside a further £200 million for innovative resilience measures in 25 areas, as well as reforms to the FloodRe insurance programme.

In addition, the Environment Agency is ready to deliver on flood schemes in 22 areas across England after the Government announced a further £170 million to accelerate flood defence construction in 2020 or 2021.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

We know that climate change is making the UK warmer and wetter, and we will be visited by extreme weather more frequently in the future.

This ambitious strategy sets out how we can become more resilient

to flooding and coastal erosion by continuing to build and maintain our flood defences while also increasing investment in nature-based solutions.

It ensures ideas like reconnecting rivers with their natural floodplain or creating new areas where water can be stored and used in times of drought will become mainstream flood protection policies in the years to come.

The Strategy sets out a series of natural flood management schemes that will not only reduce the risks to local communities, but also tackle climate change through carbon sequestration and new habitats for wildlife.

These include:

- reconnecting rivers with their natural floodplain and restoring bends, recognising the role of soils in reducing rapid run-off, or creating new areas where water can be stored
- planting more trees and restoring peatland, helping to slow the run-off of water into rivers, while also creating important natural habitats and taking carbon out of the atmosphere.
- in urban areas, using green infrastructure such as restored habitats and sustainable drainage systems to reduce flood risk and provide local people with more green spaces
- in coastal areas, creating wetlands and saltmarshes, and using beach nourishment to manage erosion and provide habitats for wildlife.

Chair, Adaptation Committee of the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), Baroness Brown, said:

We strongly welcome this Strategy. Our own analysis shows that ambitious adaptation action is needed alongside global net-zero emissions to avoid a very significant increase in damage, from river, coastal and surface water flooding across England.

Investing in flood defences is critical, but will not address the challenges of climate change on its own.

If implemented in full, the Strategy is a big step forward in managing flood risk in our changing climate. We look forward to evaluating progress in due course.

Chief Executive of the National Flood Forum, Paul Cobbing, said:

Many flood risk communities across England have actively contributed to developing this strategy; recognising that if we are serious about our growing flood risk challenges we must be ambitious, forward looking, and act with speed and urgency, reflecting peoples' needs and the devastation that flooding causes.



Local flood groups will play an active role in working with the Environment Agency and other risk management authorities to put this Strategy into action.

President of ADEPT, Nigel Riglar, said:

We need to prepare for the worst on climate change, by building resilience into our existing and future places, increasing resilience in our infrastructure, and building resilient communities – this strategy is a welcome step towards this.

Local authorities have a fundamental role to play in achieving these ambitions. They need to both lead and influence, enable a low carbon area through programmes, policies and decisions, and inspire businesses and communities to take climate action themselves.

ADEPT members have worked closely with the Environment Agency over many years to help reduce the number of homes and businesses at risk of flooding. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership to make critical investments in our communities and infrastructure at the right points in time.

Further key points in the Strategy include:

- 5:1 benefit-cost ratio – For every £1 spent on protecting communities, we avoid around £5 of property damages. The Strategy sets out in more detail the strong economic, social and environmental benefits from investing in our resilience to future flooding and coastal change.
- Resilience – From 2021 risk management authorities will work with the finance sector, Flood Re and industry to increase the uptake of property flood resilience measures in communities at highest risk and to 'build back better' after flooding.
- Education – By 2025, risk management authorities and other organisations will work with education providers to encourage opportunities for ongoing learning and career development in engineering and environmental sciences so that we have a diverse range of skills and experience able to respond to flooding.