

Press release: Future of JET secured with new European contract

A contract extension for the world's largest fusion research facility, Joint European Torus, has been signed by the UK and the European Commission

The contract extension will secure at least €100m in additional inward investment from the EU over the next two years.

The news brings reassurance for the more than 500 staff at site in Culham, near Oxford.

Staff at the Joint European Torus (JET) facility in Oxfordshire undertake research in the latest technologies aimed at providing clean, safe, inexhaustible energy. The new contract guarantees its operations until the end of 2020 regardless of the EU Exit situation, and secures at least €100m in additional inward investment from the EU over the next two years.

Science Minister Chris Skidmore said:

Having made my first speech at Culham, I know how hardworking and dedicated UK Atomic Energy Authority staff are, which is why I'm pleased to announce today's agreement, which is great news for the future of scientific research in Oxfordshire, the UK and Europe.

Extending this contract means cutting-edge and world-leading fusion research can continue in this country, which I know will be a welcome reassurance to the hundreds of workers at Culham.

Science has no borders and as we leave the EU, this kind of international collaboration remains at the heart of our modern Industrial Strategy to maintain the UK's position as a world leader in research and innovation.

JET is operated by the UK Atomic Energy Authority at Culham Science Centre, near Oxford. Scientists from 28 European countries use it to conduct research into the potential for carbon-free fusion energy in the future, through work coordinated by the EUROfusion consortium which manages and funds European fusion research activities on behalf of Euratom.

The future of the facility has been under discussion since 2017, as its work is covered by the Euratom Treaty, which the UK Government intends to leave as part of the process of leaving the EU.

This new contract provides reassurance for over 500 staff at JET, including many from outside the UK. It also means JET can conduct a series of vital fusion tests planned for 2020. These tests will serve as a 'dress rehearsal' for the new international experimental fusion reactor, ITER, currently being

built in southern France.

In addition, the contract leaves open the option of a further extension to JET's operations until 2024, which would enable it to support ITER in the run-up to its launch in 2025.

Prof Ian Chapman, CEO of the UK Atomic Energy Authority, said:

The extension to the contract is excellent news for both EU and UK science. JET has been a shining example of scientific co-operation between EU members, and this news means that these mutually beneficial collaborations will continue, allowing us to do essential experiments on the path to delivering fusion power.

Prof Tony Donn , Programme Manager of EUROfusion, added:

A heavy weight has been lifted off our shoulders. This is extraordinarily good news for EUROfusion and the European fusion community as a whole. We can now continue to work on the realisation of fusion energy together with the indispensable experience of our British partner.

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Notes to Editors

Fusion energy research

Fusion research aims to copy the process which powers the Sun for a new large-scale source of clean energy here on Earth. When light atomic nuclei fuse together to form heavier ones, a large amount of energy is released. To do this, fuel is heated to extreme temperatures, hotter than the centre of the Sun, forming a plasma in which fusion reactions take place. A commercial power station will use the energy produced by fusion reactions to generate electricity.

Nuclear fusion has huge potential as a long-term energy source that is environmentally responsible (with no carbon emissions) and inherently safe, with abundant and widespread fuel resources (the raw materials are found in seawater and the Earth's crust).

Researchers at Culham are developing a type of fusion reactor known as a 'tokamak' – a magnetic chamber in which plasma is heated and controlled. The research is focused on preparing for the international tokamak experiment ITER, now being built in southern France. ITER – due to start up in 2025 – is designed to show that fusion can work on the scale of a power plant, and if successful should lead to electricity from fusion being on the grid by around 2050.

Joint European Torus (JET)

The Joint European Torus, based at Culham Science Centre, UK, is the central research facility of the European fusion programme. It is the largest and most powerful fusion experiment in the world. JET is collectively used under EUROfusion management by more than 40 European laboratories. JET was the first fusion device to perform controlled nuclear fusion (in 1991), holds the world record for fusion power and is the only tokamak that can test the fusion fuel mix (deuterium and tritium – two isotopes of hydrogen) expected to be used in commercial reactors. Today, its primary task is to prepare for the construction and operation of ITER, acting as a test bed for ITER technologies and plasma operating scenarios.

UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA)

The UK Atomic Energy Authority carries out fusion energy research on behalf of the UK Government at Culham Science Centre near Abingdon. It is also developing Culham as a location of hi-tech research and business, with around 40 tenant companies now on site.

UKAEA oversees Britain's fusion programme, headed by the MAST Upgrade (Mega Amp Spherical Tokamak) experiment. It also hosts the world's largest fusion research facility, JET (Joint European Torus), which it operates for European scientists under a contract with the European Commission. Website: www.gov.uk/ukaea Twitter: @fusionenergy

EUROfusion

EUROfusion's mission is to pave the way for fusion power reactors.

Currently, 30 research organisations and universities from 26 European Union member states plus Switzerland and Ukraine are part of the consortium. In addition, well over 150 universities contribute to the programme. The Consortium has received funding from the Euratom research and training programme 2014-2018 and 2019-2020 under grant agreement No 633053.

Website: www.euro-fusion.org Twitter: @fusionincloseup

Speech: Fairness of the election process is common to all democracies

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is very good to join you at the opening of this conference on political finance reform, a highly relevant topic which concerns us all. I want to welcome our distinguished panellists from Germany, Sweden, Japan, and Latvia. Welcome to Montenegro.

Political parties play an essential role in all European democracies. The public may be cynical about them. But they affect all our lives in important ways. Successful politics delivers the power to take major decisions affecting economic and social life. If they are to play their essential democratic roles effectively, they need adequate funding, both nationally and locally. It is essential, therefore, that political parties obtain their funding in ways free of suspicion that donors are able to receive favours or improper influence in return.

Conference on financing political parties and campaigns

A failure to ensure transparent party funding erodes democracy on many different levels, from the trust the ordinary citizen has in the election process, to the authority with which the government can speak to its international partners. The quest to ensure the fairness of the election process is common to all democracies, no matter how established and old a democracy might be. It is as relevant to politics in the UK, as it is to you in Montenegro.

That is why it is good to see that the issue of party funding is being addressed so thoroughly through this study. Recent events have brought the issue of political financing to the forefront of public attention. This scrutiny is healthy and while it might provoke some uncomfortable conversations for political parties it is vital. Nothing bolsters a democratic dialogue more than a vigorous, transparent, public debate between voices representing contrasting opinions.

I imagine today's discussions will cover a range of challenges on this topic, including the lack of transparency in political finance reporting, the position of foreign financing, and the role of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption. I look forward to hearing the results of your discussions.

And I am pleased that the British Embassy, together with its partners, is contributing in a modest way to this frank and useful exchange of opinions about a topic of vital importance to Montenegro.

I wish the participants fruitful discussions as you consider how reform can support the development of a party financing system which is right in principle, sustainable and even-handed in its effects.

News story: Standards Coaching Team making strides in 10 prisons

- positive impact already felt across prisons hosting the teams
- part of wider £10 million strategy to reduce violence and drug use while improving decency at 10 of the most challenging prisons

Prisons Minister Rory Stewart has met specially-trained prison staff to congratulate them on their efforts to support officers in some of the country's most challenging jails.

The Minister spoke to members of the Standards Coaching Team (SCT) and the officers they are supporting about their work in the jails which are the focus of the 10 Prisons Project.

The project was launched last year to bring down violence in some of the most challenging jails, and as part of this SCT was created to provide advice and encouragement to officers in the 10 prisons.

At the event in Parliament he thanked members of SCT and the officers they are supporting for their energy and commitment to the 10 Prisons Project.

Following a two-week training course at the prison service training college at Newbold Revel, the teams have been working on a rotation around the 10 prisons.

Seven weeks in, the first group of prisons to be visited have seen encouraging results. With prison officers feeling more confident, relationships with offenders have improved and staff feel the environment on the wings is calmer and more stable.

There have also been physical improvements, with damaged furniture being replaced and cells equipped to a decent standard.

Prisons Minister Rory Stewart said:

The Standards Coaching Team is a fantastic innovation – putting training of the highest standard at the heart of healthy prisons. I am really impressed by these officers – drawn from across the country – and they are making a rapid visible difference in all the prisons they visit.

Prison Officer Craig said:

The two-week package at Newbold Revel has emphasised the importance

of pointing staff in the right direction and being a presence to support them.

It's been a really positive experience with a massive impact, staff now have the confidence to challenge and positively engage with the prisoner population.

Governor Sara Pennington said:

It's been an important step in building the skills and confidence of both our new staff and those who have been in service for some time. They've helped drive up standards across all the wings to increase consistency.

The 10 Prisons Project has seen £10 million investment in some of the most challenging prisons to curb the flow of drugs and phones, while also improving conditions and leadership at those jails. The prisons will serve as models of excellence, with good practice to be spread across the prison estate.

The project is part of a multi-million-pound drive to improve security and safety. This includes £16 million to improve conditions for prisoners and staff and £7 million on new security measures, such as security scanners, improved searching techniques, phone-blocking technology and a financial crime unit to target the criminal kingpins operating in prisons.

This has come against a backdrop of rising prison officer numbers, with more than 4,700 additional officers now recruited since October 2016 and staffing levels at their highest since 2012.

[News story: Transport Minister commends invaluable work to tackle knife crime on railways](#)

Transport Minister Andrew Jones praised the exceptional ongoing work of the British Transport Police (BTP) to tackle knife crime on Britain's railways, after patrols with the force in Stratford yesterday (28 March 2019).

Meeting with officers including BTP Assistant Chief Constable Robin Smith, the minister saw first-hand the tactics and work taking place aimed at stopping people carrying knives onto trains, as part of specialist Operation Engulf – which started last year – focused on keeping the railways safe.

This was followed by a demonstration of the methods being used by BTP to deter knife carrying, including the use of knife arches, metal detectors, and plain-clothed officers throughout stations.

Transport Minister Andrew Jones said:

For millions of people up and down the country using a train is a daily necessity, and it is absolutely vital that they know they can travel safely without the senseless threat of knife crime.

It is fantastic to see first-hand how the invaluable work of British Transport Police officers is cracking down on this issue, ensuring passengers can have total confidence in a safe and secure journey.

Through schemes such as Operation Engulf, the BTP are working to pre-empt offences before they take place by stepping up patrols in areas where crime is likely to occur.

Tactics employed at stations including Stratford have been hugely successful in helping to keep knives off our rail network. Due to measures such as enhanced officer deployments, the station has seen 33 arrests for weapon offences and 322 stop searches carried out since the specialist operation began last year.

Assistant Chief Constable Robin Smith said:

Millions of people use the railways every day and our officers are on hand 24/7 to help keep them safe.

Over the last year we have increased our targeted, intelligence-led operations against knife crime. These patrols, which often involve knife arches, metal detectors, plain clothed and uniformed officers, have been paramount in taking knives off our rail network.

Around half of all knife crime we record is as a result of weapons our officers have seized and importantly, these successful operations also act as a deterrent to those intent on carrying weapons, and help us to keep passengers and staff safe.

[**News story: New data on gender pay gap**](#)

in medicine

The interim update from the Gender Pay Gap in Medicine Review has found that the continued dominance of men in senior medical positions is one of the main causes of the gender pay gap in medicine.

The independent review, led by Professor Dame Jane Dacre, was commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care in April 2018 to advise on action to improve gender equality in the NHS. It is the largest examination of gender pay data ever conducted in the public sector.

Today's update shows that the gender pay gap for doctors is 17% based on their total pay. The overall NHS gender pay gap is 23%.

The review's initial findings show the full extent of the gender pay gap:

- the general practice gender pay gap is 33% – far higher than the average in medicine
- women are not yet represented in equal proportions in senior medical grades – there are nearly 32,000 male consultants to 18,000 female
- two-thirds of doctors in training grades are women, but within consultant grades this drops to under half
- women are over-represented in lower-paid specialties, such as public health and occupational health, but under-represented in the highest-paying specialties, such as urology and surgery
- there is variation across medical specialties, with male-dominated specialties such as urology showing a higher gender pay gap

The aim of the review is to identify the impact of cultural, practical and psychological issues that contribute to the gender pay gap in medicine. This is being achieved through in-depth analysis of anonymised pay data, evidence from interviews with medics at various career stages and an online survey of 40,000 doctors.

The final report and recommendations is due to be published in September. It is expected to address the underlying causes of the gender pay gap, such as the impact of motherhood and women's career progression while working irregular hours or part-time.

Promoting a culture of respect, equality and diversity will be a central part of the workforce implementation plan, which will be set out later this year as part of the next phase in delivering the [NHS Long Term Plan](#).

This week, further steps were taken to make the NHS a more flexible and responsive employer with a fairer system of parental leave agreed for the majority of NHS staff, giving new parents greater choice over how they manage the demands of work and family.

Health Minister Stephen Hammond said:

The founding principle of the NHS is to treat everyone equally, yet women employed in the health service are still experiencing inequality.

It's disappointing to see that the numbers show that two-thirds of senior medics are men despite more women starting training and it is essential we understand the underlying causes of the gender pay gap if we are to eradicate it from modern workplaces like the NHS.

Senior doctors and managers have an important role to play in breaking down barriers and championing equality as role models or mentors so aspiring doctors know they are joining a health service that encourages more women to reach their full potential.

We fully support Dame Jane Dacre and her team as they continue to review the medical pay gap and look forward to their final conclusions later this year.

Professor Dame Jane Dacre said:

Our research shows that the gender pay gap in medicine is slowly narrowing, but with more to do. The findings of the review will help us to work with government, employers and the profession to identify and understand the main contributors to the gap, and to explore ways to reduce it, based on our evidence.