

# World-class mine-hunting technology delivered to Royal Navy

The remotely-operated boat, controlled from either a ship or land, tows a highly-sensitive detection device to combat sea mines and keep ships and personnel away from danger.

Made possible under the joint Maritime Mine Counter Measures (MMCM) programme between the UK and France, the system, produced by Thales UK, has commenced rigorous capability development trials with the Royal Navy.

The technology will sit alongside other MMCM systems provided through an additional £184 million investment, agreed last year, and supporting around 215 jobs in the UK.

As well as Thales UK sites in Somerset and Plymouth, jobs will be sustained in the wider supply chain at L3 Harris in Portsmouth, Stonehaven in Aberdeen and Alba Ultrasound in Glasgow.

## **Defence Procurement Minister Jeremy Quin said:**

This new technology is a huge leap forward for the Royal Navy's autonomous capabilities in the detection of sea mines. These systems will keep our personnel out of harm's way whilst they conduct vital operations to protect shipping lanes from these hidden threats.

This is just one example of how we are putting innovation at the forefront of our future strategies.

## **Commodore Steve Prest, Deputy Director Navy Acquisition, UK Royal Navy said:**

It is exciting to see the first delivery to the Royal Navy from the MMCM project. The future of mine warfare is here: The Royal Navy's Mine Hunting Capability programme is real; it's happening; it's delivering. We have a lot to learn about this transformational approach to mine warfare, but there is much, much more to come.

Sea mines constitute a growing threat and users of the system will be able to detect and neutralise mines from miles away, ensuring they can keep vital sea lanes open, with much-reduced risk to ships and the lives of sailors.

The demonstrator was officially handed over to the Royal Navy in Plymouth on 23 November by staff from Thales UK, OCCAR and Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), the procurement arm of the UK Ministry of Defence.

**Vice Admiral Chris Gardner, Director General Ships at DE&S, said:**

The delivery of the MMCM demonstrator systems to the UK and France is an important milestone for the programme. This is a powerful example of how the joint commitment of the two Nations to work together under the auspices of the 2010 Lancaster House agreement can deliver world-class equipment for our Armed Forces.

Comprising an uncrewed surface vessel, towed sonar and a portable operation centre, the new mine-hunting capabilities are designed to eventually replace crewed Mine Counter-Measure Vessels, such as the Royal Navy's Hunt and Sandown class ships, with autonomous systems.

---

## **British and Danish defence ministers issue joint declaration**

Press release

The Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace, and his Danish counterpart signed a joint declaration today in Copenhagen.



**UK Secretary of State for Defence, Ben Wallace, and Danish Minister for Defence, Trine Bramsen**

**8 December 2021**

The United Kingdom and Denmark are close allies and friends. We share democratic values of freedom, rule of law, and tolerance. We have a long history of working closely together in tackling security problems, both in the framework of NATO, in coalitions and bilaterally. We are both proud seafaring nations with common interests in global safe and free navigation upon the seas.

The recent weaponisation of migration against our Polish and Lithuanian allies, along with an aggressive pattern of Russian military build-ups near Ukraine's border and in illegally-annexed Crimea, cyber-attacks, the use of disinformation, and the deployment of novel weapons systems, add to heightened tensions in Europe.

These concerning developments call for close cooperation among allies. They show us that threats are real and that we need to be alert. In an era of systemic competition, states are becoming increasingly assertive in how they advance their own objectives and while their actions may fall short of open conflict, they can nonetheless threaten our security and risk escalation into conflict. We must work together to act in response to aggression across the range of state and non-state threats: our collective response is greater than the sum of its parts. Malign and destabilising Russian and Belarussian behaviour is unacceptable and any Russian military incursion onto Ukrainian territory will have dire consequences for Russia's relationship with the West. We are proud to offer our continued support to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Our common efforts in our enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia, our integrated response forces in NATO's Readiness Initiative and Response Force, and our cooperation on stabilization efforts in Ukraine are important measures to deter and defend against the threats to the Euro-Atlantic region. Our unique relationship and cooperation are built on almost 20 years of active military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, among other places.

Today we have discussed areas for a broadened and deepened cooperation. We have agreed upon strengthened cooperation in a number of areas:

- The UK and Denmark will enhance cooperation on response forces – both within NATO and with rapid deployable forces for crisis response.
- The UK and Denmark will continue cooperation in the Baltic region, including within the framework of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia and Multinational Division (North) in Latvia and in Denmark.
- The UK and Denmark will work together to develop the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) to stand with allies and close partners and defend common values.
- The UK and Denmark will cooperate on and train Host Nation Support to ensure fast deployment of UK forces through Danish territory in case of crises. To deter Russia from aggressive behaviour and other threats, NATO must be able to deploy forces across all its regions at the speed of relevance in order to provide timely reinforcement of allies in a crisis or a military conflict. We will enhance cooperation on military mobility through NATO, the Northern Group and bilaterally.
- The UK and Denmark remain jointly committed to NATO-EU cooperation, with a view to building a mutually reinforcing partnership.
- The UK and Denmark will enhance our operational cooperation, including in the North Atlantic, in such areas as air and maritime surveillance, joint training, disaster relief, intelligence-sharing and anti-submarine operations.
- The UK and Denmark will explore opportunities for enhanced cooperation in tackling terror threats and supporting stability in Africa.

- The UK and Denmark will cooperate on training, the operational use and maintenance of frigates based on the similar designs of the UK Type 31 frigates and the Danish Ivar Huitfeldt-class frigates.

All this serves to strengthen our common stance against threats to our common security.

We are adamant in our support for, and defence of, our common values and our freedom.

Published 8 December 2021

---

## [Watch – queue-dodging motorist puts lives at risk by using M5 hard shoulder](#)

This is the moment a motorist was caught illegally driving down the hard shoulder of the M5 during a fortnight of action by police patrolling the South West's motorways in unmarked National Highways HGV cabs.

### [Motorist caught illegally driving on hard shoulder](#)

The driver took it upon themselves to avoid three lanes of stationary traffic by travelling up the hard shoulder between junction 24 for Bridgwater and junction 23 for Highbridge.

Little did the driver of the Renault Captur know that they were being filmed by officers from a National Highways cab – and ended up with a traffic summons.

Acting Sergeant Martyn Truscott of Avon and Somerset Police said:

Department for Transport figures show that more than 100 people are killed or seriously injured each year on motorway hard shoulders in the UK.

There are only two legal uses for the hard shoulder – as a lane for emergency vehicles attending an incident and as a refuge for broken down vehicles. Using it at any other time unless instructed to do so by traffic officers or roadworks signs can land you with a £100 fine and three points on your licence. Stopping because a passenger feels unwell or needs the toilet, to use your mobile phone or because you are feeling tired are not acceptable uses for the hard shoulder.

You are also not allowed to use the hard shoulder to bypass traffic jams.

The incident was one of 240 offences – averaging 24 per day – recorded during Operation Peninsula, a multi-agency fortnight of action on the M5 and M4.

As part of a national Operation Tramline programme, police forces across the country have been employing the unmarked National Highways' HGV cabs on regular safety operations across the strategic road network since 2015, and last-month south east forces patrolled the M25 as part of Operation Orbital.

National Highways is keen to raise awareness of any high-risk behaviours, and Head of Road Safety Jeremy Phillips said:

Our aim through this campaign was to make not only the M5 and M4 but all of our roads in the South West safer by raising awareness and encouraging motorists to consider their driving behaviour.

The HGV cabs helped the police to identify hundreds of dangerous drivers who could have caused collisions and harm if they hadn't been pulled over. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency also intervened to take dangerous vehicles off the road, and our safety advice given at motorway services and through the campaign also helped.

We are confident that, working together with our road safety partners, this campaign has helped spread our safety messages to drivers but also raised awareness that those who engage in high risk behaviours can expect to be spotted and, if an offence has been committed, action will be taken by our enforcement partners.

During the fortnight, police officers caught 64 drivers using their hand-held devices illegally or resting on their laps, and PC Sarah Harvey of Devon and Cornwall Police said:

We are seeing drivers using mobile phones in their laps – this is extremely dangerous as they are looking down and anywhere but the road ahead.

Life has become too reliant on mobile phones, from recording voice messages to watching films. Just because you are on a hands-free device it still means you are not fully concentrating on the road and other road users around you.

It only takes a split second for it to go horribly wrong so put your phone on silent and pop it into your glove compartment so you aren't tempted to use it while driving.

In total, 192 vehicles were stopped by police using the unmarked cabs along sections of the M4 and M5, including 77 HGVs and 78 private vehicles and action taken ranged from words of advice or fixed penalty notices to traffic offences being reported and five arrests.

Failing to wear a seatbelt was the second most common offence with 41 people seen risking their lives without the safety protection, while 23 speeding offences were recorded.

National Highways (formerly Highways England) deals with countless incidents on the M5 and M4, the company attending 526 traffic collisions on the M4 and 821 collisions on the M5 in 2019.

But the fortnight of action saw a 20% reduction in the number of incidents and traffic collisions for the same period from the pre-pandemic figures of 2019.

National Highways' HGV cabs offer police officers an elevated position to spot any dangerous and unsafe driving.

Sgt Lucy Powell of Gloucestershire Constabulary said:

The vantage point from the cab allows us to detect offences that we might not see from our normal patrol vehicles, particularly with heavy goods vehicles and larger vans.

Operation Peninsula allowed us to monitor drivers on the M5 in a bid to ensure the roads of Gloucestershire are safe for all – drivers using a phone behind the wheel are four times more likely to be involved in a collision, far less likely to notice and react to hazards, and more likely to show poor lane discipline and make more variable speed choices.

In addition to the Operation Tramline HGV cabs, there were also Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency patrols, vehicle stops and advice given to drivers at motorway services by campaign partners, including the Somerset Road Safety team.

The DVSA teams examined a total of 73 vehicles – 68 HGVs, two LGVs, a minibus and agricultural tractor and trailer – and among the 23 offences:

- 12 vehicles were immediately prohibited
- Four lorries in Devon were found to have defective brakes and other serious mechanical issues
- Eight Fixed Penalty Notices, totalling £1,750, were issued, including one vehicle where the driver had been found to have manipulated his tachograph
- One vehicle impounded for being operated without an operator's licence and subsequently disposed of.

DVSA's Director of Enforcement Marian Kitson said:

DVSA's priority is to protect everyone from unsafe drivers and vehicles.

As a society we have become increasingly aware of how valuable the haulage industry is. Most operators keep to safety rules and continue to provide a vital service for our country.

It was disappointing, however, that together with our partner agencies we found serious examples of unsafe vehicles and drivers during this operation.

DVSA's guidance is available to all operators and drivers to ensure they are able to supply our country safely.

Other agencies taking part in the fortnight of action included Somerset Road Safety and Devon and Somerset Fire Service, who joined Avon and Somerset Police, National Highways' traffic officers and the DVSA at a Fit for the Road safety event at Taunton Deane Services, raising awareness of the importance of tyre checks and other safety tips.

### **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

### **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

---

## **[Somerset supplier to national supermarkets fined for polluting watercourse](#)**

The case was heard at Bristol Magistrates Court on 2 December 2021.

Alvis Brothers Ltd have a long history of environmental offending, having previously received a formal caution and warning letters from the Environment Agency.

Lye Cross Farm supplies cheese to major supermarkets including Waitrose, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury, and exports to more than 40 countries around

the world.

On 28 June 2019 an environment officer attended Lye Cross Farm following a report of slurry pollution to a tributary of the Congresbury Yeo near Cheddar.

The source of the pollution was found to be run off from a heap of farmyard manure at Lye Cross Farm. The run off had entered a surface water drain that led to the stream, and more than half a kilometre was polluted.

Alvis Brothers Ltd built a basic bund to contain the run off, but when environment officers returned to the farm on 2 July effluent was leaking from the bund and again contaminating the watercourse.

Assessments by the Environment Agency the following week found a chronic impact on the aquatic invertebrates living downstream of the farm, whilst sensitive species, indicating a good water quality, were only found upstream.

The leak of slurry from the bund was still happening on a return to site on 31 July.

On a farm visit on 18 September, environment officers witnessed a second pollution, this time as a result of pig slurry being spread on nearby fields. The slurry entered a field drain, discharging to the same watercourse.

In court District Judge Lynne Matthews described the offences as 'disgraceful' and 'appalling'. She said that the company should not require 'nurse-maiding' by the Environment Agency, given their farming experience.

Judge Matthews also said that in all the pollutions she had dealt with, offenders had not had as many slaps across the hand from the Environment Agency as in this case.

A quote on the Lye Cross Farm website says: "The Alvis Family takes the future of agriculture seriously – their livelihood depends entirely on how they look after their land and livestock. At Lye Cross Farm we practice two different methods of farming – organic and non-organic. If managed properly both are sustainable and do not damage the environment..."

Environment Agency Environment Officer, Jenny Hasell, said:

"Repeated pollution events from Lye Cross Farm have caused protracted damage to the local environment.

"We expect much better from such a large and experienced farming business, both for the environment and the local communities. If you are concerned about pollution to water or land, contact our 24-hour incident line on 0800 807060."

June 2019: gross sewage fungus growth downstream of the discharge



## The offences

Causing an unpermitted water discharge activity, namely the discharge of poisonous, noxious or polluting matter on and before 28 June 2019 from Lye Cross Farm, Redhill, Bristol into inland fresh waters contrary to Regulations 12(1)(b) and Regulation 38(1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

Fine £22,000.00

Causing an unpermitted water discharge activity, namely the discharge of poisonous, noxious or polluting matter on and before 18 September 2019 from Lye Cross Farm, Redhill, Bristol into inland fresh waters contrary to Regulations 12(1)(b) and Regulation 38(1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

Fine £ 7,000.00

Costs £ 8,003.02

Victim surcharge £ 181.00

---

## [Severn Trent Water fined £1.5 million for sewage discharges](#)

- Severn Trent Water fined £1.5 million for illegal sewage discharges
- Approx 360,000 litres of sewage discharged into one brook

Severn Trent Water Limited has been fined £1.5 million for sewage discharges from 4 sewage treatment works in Worcestershire between February and August 2018. The water company has also been ordered to pay prosecution costs of £58,365.

The court heard how the company failed to respond to alarms warning of a blockage, failed to adequately manage sewage sludge, and failed to adequately manage a situation when a piece of equipment failed. Resulting in sewage being discharged into a number of watercourses in Worcestershire.

Prosecuting for the Environment Agency, Counsel Mr James Puzey told the court that in February 2018, Severn Trent Water failed to respond promptly to alarms at its sewage treatment works at Blackminster, near Evesham. A blockage to the works resulted in approximately 360,000 litres of sewage being illegally discharged to the nearby Broadway Brook. It was hours before Severn Trent Water operatives attended to take remedial action.

The court also heard how over the winter of 2017/2018, Severn Trent Water failed to adequately manage treatment of sewage sludge at other treatment

works in Worcestershire.

This caused sludge to build up within the sewage treatment system. At the company's sewage treatment works at Bromsgrove and Stoke Prior, problems with the sewage treatment process led to discharges into the Sugar Brook and Hen Brook exceeding the permitted levels of BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand) in early March 2018.

Severn Trent Water also had problems at its Priest Bridge works near Redditch in July and August 2018, when a piece of equipment designed to remove fibrous material from incoming sewage at the start of the process failed. The company did not adequately manage the situation, which resulted in discharges from the site in breach of limits set for ammoniacal nitrogen over a 2-day period in early August 2018. A similar incident had occurred in 2011.

In passing sentence, District Judge Strongman said in respect of the Blackminster incident, "Alarms were not actioned as they should have been." This resulted in the works "discharging for 4 hours."

In respect of the Bromsgrove and Stoke Prior incident the judge stated, "Bad weather played a part but more should have been done to cope with the problems by way of spare capacity."

In respect of the Priest Bridge incident, District Judge Strongman said, "There was a serious problem developing", and that Severn Trent Water were, "in no great hurry to carry out maintenance."

Severn Trent Water's previous convictions were an aggravating feature of this prosecution.

A fine of £1 million was imposed for the offence at Blackminster and £500,000 for the offence at Priest Bridge. No separate penalty was imposed for breaches at Bromsgrove and Stoke Prior.

Since these incidents the company has advised the Environment Agency that it has changed its management structure and provided better technical support.

The company has also invested at the Bromsgrove works to improve treatment efficiency. Severn Trent Water Ltd have also stated that it plans to rebuild its works at Blackminster, and to close the works at Stoke Prior towards the end of the decade.

David Throup, Environment Manager for the West Midlands Area of the Environment Agency, said:

Incidents like this are preventable and are completely unacceptable, particularly at a time when the need to protect the water environment for wildlife and people has never been greater and when public consciousness on environmental matters is so high.

Water companies are aware that their activities have the potential for serious environmental impacts, and they know that we will take

action when they cause pollution. The Environment Agency does and will continue to hold water companies to account when their performance falls below acceptable standards.

We'd urge anyone that sees suspected water pollution to report it to us immediately on our incident hotline 0800 80 70 60.

This conviction follows the announcement that [the Environment Agency and Ofwat have both launched new investigations into sewage treatment works](#) after new checks led to water companies admitting that they could be releasing unpermitted sewage discharges. Any company caught breaching their permits could face a range of possible enforcement action – up to and including prosecution.

Sentencing of the case brought by the Environment Agency, occurred at Kidderminster Magistrates' Court on 7 December 2021. The company pleaded guilty to allegations at an earlier court hearing in August 2021.

### **Charges/breaches of permit**

Severn Trent Water Limited (company number 02366686), on 20 February 2018 at Blackminster Wastewater Treatment Works, Blackminster, Worcestershire, failed to comply with condition 2.3.2 of Environmental Permit number S/16/26290/R, in that sewage was discharged into the Broadway Brook at Blackminster, Worcestershire, in conditions other than those set out in table S3.3 of the Environmental Permit, contrary to Regulation 38 (2) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

Between 3 March 2018 and 10 March 2018, at Bromsgrove Sewage Treatment Works Aston Road, Bromsgrove Severn Trent Water Limited did breach a condition of Environmental Permit S/07/56027/R in respect of upper tier limits set for Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) in the final effluent discharging to Sugar Brook contrary to regulation 38(2) Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

Between 5 March 2018 and 10 March 2018, at Stoke Prior Sewage Treatment Works, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove Severn Trent Water Limited did breach a condition of Environmental Permit S/07/56078 in respect of upper tier limits set for Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) in the final effluent discharging to Hen Brook contrary to regulation 38(2) Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

Between 6 August 2018 and 9 August 2018 at Priest Bridge Sewage Treatment Works, Priest Bridge, Worcestershire, Severn Trent Water Limited did breach Environmental Permit S/19/26264/R Condition 3.1.1 relating to limits set for ammoniacal nitrogen contrary to Regulation 38(2) of the Environmental permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016.