

Dstl celebrates 20 remarkable years

The last 2 decades have seen some incredible accomplishments and discoveries and placed Dstl at the heart of the most critical incidents facing the UK. Among them the response to the Salisbury nerve agent attack and the cross-government action to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

Dstl Interim Chief Executive, Doug Umbers, said:

It's an enormous privilege to be at the helm of an organisation which has helped protect the UK people and continues to shape defence and security through our ideas, innovation and expertise. Science and technology will drive the way we live and work, and the next 20 years promises to hit even greater heights.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

For the last 20 years, Dstl scientists have paved the way in providing research and expertise to the benefit of defence and wider UK national security.

Often behind the scenes, Dstl's vital work has created world-leading innovations ensuring we stay ahead of a myriad of emerging threats. I congratulate the whole team for everything they have achieved over the last 2 decades.

Chief Scientific Adviser for the Ministry of Defence, Professor Dame Angela McLean said:

Being a proven defence asset, Dstl has shown how it can serve the nation by developing vital advanced and technological capabilities for defence and security. I have been privileged in recent times to witness the incredible scientific work done by Dstl.

I send my congratulations to all at Dstl, past and present, who have worked so brilliantly over the last 20 years to cement its place at the forefront of innovation.

20 years of Dstl

Dstl has been integral to the success of the biggest defence projects such as:

- the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers and their F-35 Lightning jets
- the Foxhound armoured vehicle

- the Boxer, the Army's future fighting vehicle

Plus support to the criminal justice system through crucial evidence in high profile terrorist cases including the atrocities of the Manchester bombing.

More than 4,500 scientists and key staff employed at Dstl are now tackling tomorrow's challenges and the design of next generation systems such as autonomous vehicles on land, sea and in the air with artificial intelligence (AI), enabling platforms to manoeuvre and communicate more efficiently and effectively. Data and digital experts are using their skills to help keep the UK people safe from online and cyber threats through vital support to the National Cyber Force (NCF).

Dstl's research in space will enable the UK to monitor, direct and protect UK interests through increasing space domain awareness and the establishment of UK-built Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance satellite constellation and a supporting digital backbone. Dstl will use AI and data analytics to scan the horizon for transformative technologies that can be applied to defence projects.

Much of this work is done in collaboration and partnering with academia, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and prime contractors, both in the UK and with our international allies, to harness innovation and expertise through research partnerships. This work will help the UK meet its ambition of being a science superpower and will see Dstl spend an additional £1 billion on external research over the next 4 years.

Formed in 2001 when the Ministry of Defence (MOD) split the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) to create commercial company QinetiQ and Dstl, the organisation's origins can be traced as far back as 1664.

[Independent reviewers appointed for councils requesting financial support](#)

The government has appointed independent reviewers to undertake assurance reviews into 8 councils, following decisions earlier this year to provide exceptional financial support to these authorities.

The government has formally appointed the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to undertake the financial element of these external assurance reviews.

This follows a decision to provide exceptional financial support packages to 8 councils subject to an external review. These authorities are Bexley, Copeland, Eastbourne, Luton, Peterborough, Redcar & Cleveland, Slough and Wirral councils.

The external assurance reviewers will provide a detailed assessment of each councils' financial position and management, making recommendations where necessary of how each council can take action to improve.

Local Government Minister Luke Hall said:

The government has committed over £35 billion to help councils support their communities and local businesses during the pandemic.

Even with the considerable support already provided there will be individual councils with unique circumstances which, in some cases, has been exacerbated by poor financial management on their part.

These reviewers will ensure each of the councils have plans in place so that they are financially sustainable, minimising the need for further government support and working in the interests of the communities they serve.

The external reviews will provide an assessment of a council's financial management and management of risk; deliverability of savings plans and efficiency in delivering services.

Any recommendations from these reviews will inform the Local Government Secretary's decisions on exceptional financial support for the financial year 2021-22, and any other matters of concern at the authorities.

In the case of Slough, Peterborough and Wirral, the reviews will look at both the councils' financial position and wider governance arrangements, to ensure they can deliver financially sustainable plans for the communities they serve.

This decision has been taken in response to wider concerns at each of the councils. In the case of Slough this includes recent statutory recommendations issued by external auditors, relating to the council's overall financial sustainability, as well as its arrangements for financial governance and monitoring.

The government is also confirming the appointment of these reviewers today (30 June 2021). Andrew Flockhart has been confirmed as the reviewer for Peterborough Council, Ada Adams for Wirral Council and Jim Taylor for Slough Council. Each has a wealth of experience within local government having worked in a range of senior roles.

See further details on [exceptional financial support agreed or agreed in principle](#).

The confirmed reviewers are:

Peterborough – Andrew Flockhart

Chief Executive of Poole Borough Council from April 2014 to his retirement in

March 2019 where he led the council through the Dorset/Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole unitarisation.

Wirral – Ada Burns

Chief Executive of Darlington Borough Council until 2018 where she played an important role in the development of the Tees Valley Mayoral Combined Authority. She worked in senior roles in London on housing and regeneration for 25 years prior to moving to Darlington.

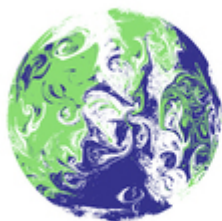
Slough – Jim Taylor

Chief Executive of Salford City Council for 6 years until his retirement in January 2021. He was interim Chief Executive of Trafford Borough Council from July 2018 to February 2019 and prior to that Chief Executive of Rochdale Borough Council.

[COP26 President-Designate urges global collaboration on climate action at Austrian World Summit](#)

Press release

COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma visits Vienna to take part in the Austria World Summit and to strengthen support for international climate action ahead of COP26.



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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

- COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma visits Vienna to take part in the Austria World Summit
- Initiative founded by Arnold Schwarzenegger aims to bring together heads of state and government as well as business leaders and activists to

discuss efforts to reduce global emissions.

- Mr Sharma will also meet Austrian ministers to discuss Austria's climate leadership and to strengthen support for international climate action ahead of COP26.

COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma will visit Austria on Thursday 1 July to take part in the Austrian World Summit (AWS). He will call for international collaboration against the effects of climate change ahead of hosting COP26 in November.

The AWS, organised by Arnold Schwarzenegger, is a key event in the run up to the vital UN climate change summit. Mr Sharma will meet with Austrian President Alexander van der Bellen and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, during the summit, alongside ministers, business leaders and climate activists and experts.

During the summit, Mr Sharma will set out the UK's four key objectives as COP26 hosts and why keeping the critical goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5C alive is so important.

Ahead of his visit Alok Sharma said:

The Austrian World Summit is vital in bringing key people together and I commend Arnold Schwarzenegger using his global profile to advance the climate agenda in this way.

We are at a crucial point in the global fight against climate change and cannot afford to lose any more time.

We are seeing progress. When the UK Government was first announced as the incoming COP Presidency back in 2019, less than 30% of the world economy was covered by a net zero target. We're now at 70%.

But in the run up to COP26 we need all countries to step up ambition with short term plans for the next decade and strive for net zero by mid-century.

I look forward to speaking with Austrian and international leaders on how we can continue to work together in our efforts to raise climate ambition, and the UK's goals for an inclusive, ambitious COP26.

Notes to editors

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- The 26th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), COP26 will take place 31 October

-12 November, 2021, in Glasgow, UK.

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Proposals to expand Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) extension to be considered.
- Natural England will take forward the Prime Minister's commitment in his 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution to designate more national landscapes.
- Renewed commitment to boost nature recovery and help more people access Britain's most beautiful landscapes as we build back greener from the pandemic.

Natural England is today (Thursday 24 June) announcing that the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is to be considered for boundary expansion. Securing this designation would allow the area to benefit from greater protections, so that more of England's beautiful landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

The Chilterns is home to many vibrant and growing communities. An extension to the Chilterns AONB would provide direct access to high-quality natural environments from many urban areas such as Luton, Hemel Hempstead and Slough. This newly designated land would provide people living in these areas with greater opportunities to access to the countryside, benefit from the tranquillity it provides, and get away from the pressures of everyday life.

Today's announcement is equally important for Chilterns' wildlife and habitats. With its globally rare chalk streams, wildflower rich chalk grassland and prehistoric settlements – including Bronze and Iron Age hillforts – extending the boundaries of the AONB provides opportunities for a more strategic approach to caring for future generations' assets currently outside the protected area.

Three other areas – the Surrey Hills, Cheshire Sandstone Ridge and Yorkshire Wolds – will be considered for greater protections, with potential to deliver over 40% of the additional 4,000 square kilometres required to meet the UK's commitment to protect 30% of our land by 2030.

Allison Potts, Area Manager for Natural England, said:

The Chilterns represent some of the finest and most accessible landscapes in South East England. Designated to conserve and

enhance natural beauty, the area is enjoyed by millions of people from across the region.

We are delighted to confirm that we'll be exploring an extension to the Chilterns AONB and hope that, as a result of this exciting collaborative approach, we can bring people closer to nature-rich landscapes, contributing to a green recovery from the impact of coronavirus and protecting more of this beautiful and biodiverse landscape.

Dr Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer at the Chilterns Conservation Board, said:

We are delighted that Natural England has chosen to consider our proposal for the Chilterns AONB to be increased in size. This is an exciting chapter in our history, which will help bring more people closer to nature and increase opportunities for recreation and enjoyment of this special landscape.

We are also excited at the opportunity to explore new and innovative approaches by which we can tackle the impacts of climate change, reverse declines in nature, support our local businesses and improve people's well-being and access to our special landscapes. This is even more important as we all work to recover from the impacts of the Covid pandemic.

The proposals follow the [independent review](#) led by Julian Glover, which called for action to make our protected landscapes greener, more beautiful and open to everyone. Natural England welcomed the review which set out a compelling vision for more beautiful, biodiverse and accessible National Parks and AONBs.

Chair of Natural England Tony Juniper said:

Today's announcement signals an ambitious step forward in growing our family of precious national landscapes, as well as protecting and improving the ones we have.

One thing that has become very apparent recently, and especially during the pandemic, is the enormous benefit people get from having access to beautiful nature-rich landscapes. These can, however, be hard for many people to access, thereby raising the question of how more can be done to bring nature and people closer together. On this, we see huge opportunities arising from the establishment of the England Nature Recovery Network, of which wilder national landscapes will be a vital part.

As government's statutory landscape adviser, we look forward to continuing to work closely with Government, designated landscape

bodies and stakeholders to deliver more for and through England's diverse landscapes.

- Find out more about the [Chilterns](#)
- See further details about [today's announcement](#)
- Natural England is the government's statutory advisor on landscapes in England, with duties and powers to conserve and enhance landscapes that include the designation of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- The designation process is likely to take several years and will be a collaborative process including local stakeholders at every step
- These new areas of landscape designation have been selected through an evidence-based assessment from proposals that have been made to Natural England over the last 10 years

The 4 areas being considered for designation across the country are:

- An extension to the Chilterns AONB – to consider many special features including chalk streams, magnificent beechwoods, native woodland and wildflower-rich hills, bringing nature closer to populations in North London
- An extension to the Surrey Hills AONB – to consider including areas of high scenic quality including chalk grassland, parkland and historic features adjacent to the existing AONB
- Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB – a diverse, distinctive, and celebrated landscape located in the heart of Cheshire, in close proximity to the large populations of NW England, rich in heritage, archaeology, wildlife, and culture
- Yorkshire Wolds AONB – a tranquil landscape of rolling hills, valleys and open plateaux interspersed with ancient woodland, chalk streams, farm holdings and historic villages, extending north from the River Humber

Government support for improved nature recovery and public access

Today, the Environment Secretary will set out the government's support for improved nature recovery and public access in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty ahead of a consultation on draft proposals later this year. The statement will also outline a new 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' programme to support farmers and other land managers to improve their landscapes and create thriving destinations for communities to enjoy. As Government's statutory landscape adviser, the proposals for new designations will be delivered by Natural England, who will also be supporting the new programme for farmers in protected landscapes.

[New funding from UK Space Agency will kickstart space technology projects](#)

The call for Grants for Exploratory Ideas, part of the National Space Technology Programme aims to fund short, three-month long projects that support innovative space technology activities, encourage collaboration between industry and academia, and encourage new entrants to the space sector.

Projects could include knowledge transfer, skills development, market studies, and proof of concepts for space technology. The UK Space Agency is encouraging those who are new to space technology to participate in the call. Established businesses, non-profits and academics are also welcome to apply.

Charles McCausland, Head of Major Projects and Technology Development, UK Space Agency, said:

As we recover from the impact of the pandemic, this programme will play an important role in nurturing new collaborations and supporting early-stage ideas which have the power to grow the space sector, create jobs and strengthen the UK's position in the global space market.

Since launching in 2011, the NSTP has supported 277 projects. Previous successful applicants include London-based Rocket Engineering, which invented a magnetic propulsion system the size of a can of coffee, allowing spacecraft to manoeuvre more efficiently in orbit.

Northumberland's NORSS developed and tested a data processing pipeline that could use a novel electro-optical camera system to process Low Earth Orbit Space Surveillance and Tracking data, an improvement upon slower conventional radar observations.

[Figures released by the UK Space Agency in May](#) show strong growth in the UK space sector. Income rising from £14.8 billion in 2016/17 to £16.4 billion in 2018/19, representing a growth of 5.7 per cent in real terms, while employment is up by 3,200 from 41,900 to 45,100. Research and development spending rose 18 per cent in real terms from £595 million in 2016/17 to £702 million in 2018/19.