

# AI and data science expansion for Dstl in the north

Press release

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) is creating a new unit based at the National Innovation Centre for Data (NICD) in Newcastle.



Around 15 new staff will be recruited to work at the unit which is due to open in late 2021.

The NICD seeks to address the shortage of data analytics skills in the UK and helps companies and organisations to exploit data. Dstl will be able to access NICD's ecosystem of non-traditional small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) suppliers to help solve defence and security data challenges.

The NICD is supported by Newcastle University which, along with other regional universities, offers a diverse pool supply of suitably qualified potential staff.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

As outlined in the Integrated Review, our £6.6 billion investment into research and development will supercharge science and innovation to lead the way in developing cutting-edge technologies.

I am delighted that Dstl are expanding their pioneering work in the north east of England which will benefit from a range of new skills sets, knowledge and expertise.

The establishment of the team in Newcastle will provide Dstl with greater resilience, capacity and diversity in artificial intelligence and data science, which is a critical area for the UK and in increasing demand. The move demonstrates Dstl's commitment to supporting the levelling up agenda and

increase collaboration with universities and non-traditional SME suppliers.

Paul Kealey, the Dstl Division Head responsible for the new team, commented:

This is a really exciting opportunity to leverage innovation, create jobs and business opportunities, and contribute to the government's 'levelling up' ambitions. It will support the UK to achieve its vision as a great science power by tapping in to the diverse pool of regional talent and highly skilled businesses.

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## [Highways England awards major A358 contract to Taylor Woodrow](#)

The contract award follows a competitive procurement process through Highways England's Regional Delivery Partnership framework.

Preparatory works have been taking place with Taylor Woodrow, in partnership with Arup and Ramboll, undertaking ground investigation and environmental surveys in the area to inform their design proposals.

This is all in preparation for a statutory consultation on the proposals ahead of submission of the scheme's Development Consent Order application to the Planning Inspectorate.

Andrew Alcorn, Highways England Programme Leader for the A358, said:

We are delighted to be working with Taylor Woodrow Plus to move forward this vital scheme.

Taylor Woodrow has an extensive track record working with Highways England and delivering large scale infrastructure projects, so we are confident they will deliver a scheme that will support economic growth, improve traffic flows at peak times and make the road safer.

Julian Gatward, Managing Director of Taylor Woodrow, said:

Taylor Woodrow Plus is pleased to have been awarded the contract to deliver such a significant improvement for motorists and the local

community.

Taylor Woodrow Plus brings together the expertise of Taylor Woodrow, Arup and Ramboll in delivering solutions from conception through to construction.

Supported by Taylor Woodrow's VINCI sister companies, we are committed to contributing to the local community whilst supporting economic growth in the area.

Vital to the A303/A358 corridor, this scheme is part of a long-term aim to create a high-quality dual carriageway link between London and the south east and the south west.

While much of the corridor is a dual carriageway, there are still over 35 miles of single carriageway.

These sections act as congestion bottlenecks, particularly in the summer months and at weekends, causing delays to road users, rat-running through surrounding villages and an increased safety risk.

To address this, Highways England is proposing to upgrade a nine-mile section of the A358 between Southfields roundabout on the A303 and the M5 in Somerset, to high quality dual carriageway.

Carrying 24,800 vehicles a day, this will also provide direct access to the Nexus 25 development near Taunton and traffic through Henlade will be reduced by almost 90%.

The scheme will also make journeys safer by reducing the number of road junctions and other private accesses with direct access onto the A358, where traffic turns across on-coming traffic – replacing them with a number of slip road type junctions and other access arrangements.

Improved connectivity and reduced journey times will assist the local and regional economy by making Taunton, Somerset and the south west a more attractive place to work and do business.

Highways England will seek views on its latest designs in a public consultation later this autumn before submitting a Development Consent Order application.

Paula Hewitt, Somerset County Council's Lead Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure, said:

It's great to see this significant step forward with the project.

The A358/A303 is an important transport corridor, and this long-awaited and vital improvement will provide a massive boost for the economy of Somerset, as well as improving connectivity and travel times.

For Highways England, the news follows last year's Development Consent Order approval of the A303 Stonehenge upgrade and January's approval of the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester scheme along the same travel corridor.

The transformational [A303 Stonehenge](#) upgrade will tackle congestion on the notorious, traffic-clogged single carriageway section of the A303, while the three-mile [A303 Sparkford to Ilchester](#) scheme in Somerset will help to further unlock economic growth by addressing another bottleneck on the route.

On an average day the A303 carries 23,500 vehicles, but numbers increase significantly in the summer, particularly at weekends, making journeys unreliable and unpredictable.

In the meantime, further information on upgrading the A358 can be found on the [A358 Taunton to Southfields webpage](#).

## **General enquiries**

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

## **Media enquiries**

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

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# **[Environment Agency works with angling clubs to plant 8,000 trees](#)**

Press release

Five angling clubs and the Middle Level Commissioners have benefited from a £10,000 tree investment to help wildlife, local communities and fisheries.



A member from one of the fisheries planting a tree. For each tree removed the Environment Agency plants 5 more in its place.

The Environment Agency recently distributed 8,000 trees between five fisheries and the Middle Level Commissioners as part of the compensatory planting project.

This project aims to replace dangerous trees that can cause harm to people and floods assets.

The Environment Agency worked in partnership with these organisations to identify areas that needed additional support.

Trees planted on designated embankments or in a state of ruin were removed and replaced.

For each tree removed the Environment Agency planted an estimated five more in its place.

Our fisheries officer presenting some of the trees to a fishery.

The Environment Agency provided the trees and angling club staff along with members of the local community worked together to remove trees in decline and replace them with native trees.

The fisheries which benefited from investment include:

1. Biggleswade and Hitchin Angling Association developed their Sandy New Road complex and Gingerbread lake.
2. Embryo Angling who developed the Broom Blue Lake Fishery.
3. Olney and Clifton Fishing Association developed a side channel off the main Great Ouse.
4. Milton Keynes Angling Association planted trees within their Bradwell Fishery.
5. River Lane Fishery expanded upon its existing planting program.
6. Middle Level Commissioners used 6500 young tree seedlings (whips) to plant two sections of land in the Fens.

The trees planted will offer a range of benefits such as providing shade and cover for fish while also contributing towards wildlife diversity.

Youngsters helped out to plant the trees too.

All trees planted were UK species such as alder, silver birch, oak, weeping willow, field maple, whips and many others.

Alex Malcolm, Environment Agency fisheries officer, said:

The 8,000 trees planted across East Anglia will provide great benefits to anglers and local communities while also improving wildlife biodiversity and habitats. Due to the complexity of our Fenland rivers, it is not always possible to replace trees in close proximity to the areas they have been removed from. However, it is fantastic that other fisheries and rivers have been able to benefit from this work. We hope the trees can grow well over the coming years and contribute to improved fisheries and biodiversity in their local areas.

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## [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): DVSA Chief Executive letter to driving instructors about lessons and tests](#)

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## [Exciting space tech on show at joint UK/US held demo-day](#)

In November 2020, the [Defence and Security Accelerator](#) (DASA) hosted the world's first [International Space Pitch Day](#) (ISPD) – a joint UK and US

initiative to find and fast-track innovations that enhance space domain capabilities. The competition culminated in ten tech start-ups securing contracts each worth up to £53,000, after pitching exciting space technologies directly to UK, US and NATO military leaders.

To keep pace with evolving threats, a grand coalition of Dstl, DASA, Royal Air Force, UK Strategic Command, the US Air Force, US Space Force, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) turned to the commercial sector to connect world-class space innovation to military end-users at pace.

ISPD marked a series of incredible firsts, such as the first time same-day contracts have been awarded by the UK Ministry of Defence, and the first time two international allies have jointly held a “pitching” style event to award defence contracts.

Four months later, on 30-31 March 2021, we saw the results of that funding during two-days of technology demonstrations, witnessing ideas emerge from concept to reality in an incredible display of innovation.

The technologies on display during the demo day offered an actual glimpse into how UK and US militaries will cooperate to ensure challenges in the space domain can be overcome.

## **Is this the exciting future of space defence?**

The space domain is ever developing, with challenges such as the intent of space actors, the ability to accurately monitor space debris, the threat of space weather and the ability to safeguard satellites to consider.

The event showed a fresh way of working to fast-track innovation and cutting-edge technology to the front line quicker than ever before.

Cognitive Space, a US company that demoed multi-level space asset security through partitioned blockchain said;

ISPD has helped enable aerospace focused tech startups like us (Cognitive Space) to collaborate and grow while supplying DASA with innovative technologies not currently available in the industry.

Melanie Stricklan, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Slingshot Aerospace said;

The Slingshot team would like to thank DASA for a great experience throughout the ISPD event and pitch process.

The Slingshot Orbital ensemble catalog provides a foundation for reliable, predictive analytics and will provide space operators with important information to maintain space superiority over adversaries. We look forward to working with Dstl to commercialize this critical technology.

And precursor SPC, who showcased a space weather impact tool said;

The DASA platform is the catalyst for the future of Space Weather now casting and forecasting, precursor's 4D Space Weather Operational Impact Tool.

## **The technologies demonstrated at the event were::**

### **Visualisation and analysis**

- 114 AI Innovation LLP (India)
- RiskAware Ltd (United Kingdom)
- Rocket Communications (United States)
- Swim.ai, Inc. (United States)
- Slingshot Aerospace, Inc. (United States)
- Clutch Space Systems Limited (United Kingdom)

### **Satellite spectrum monitoring**

- Clearbox Systems Pty Ltd (Australia)

### **Multi-Level Security through Partitioned Blockchain**

- Cognitive Space, Inc. (United States)

### **Space Weather**

- precursor SPC (United States)
- Spire Global UK (United Kingdom)

## **Note to editors: What is the International Space Pitch Day?**

International Space Pitch Day is a joint UK-US initiative that aims to find, fund and fast-track innovation and technology that gives advantage to military personnel and operations in the space domain.

The competition was open to innovators and entrepreneurs from all over the world delivered through the UK Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA), assisted by Starburst Accelerator.

It is specifically designed to bolster tech start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and harness the power of their ingenuity and innovation.

The endeavour is jointly funded by the UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), Royal Air Force and the US Air Force.

A grand coalition of Dstl, DASA, Royal Air Force, UK Strategic Command, the US Air Force, US Space Force, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation



(NATO) has been assembled to find, fund, and fast-track the best ideas from start-up innovators to the front line.

The format is the first of its kind in an international collaboration between two international allies.