

[The government response to commercial spaceflight consultations](#)

On Friday 5 March 2021, I published the [government's response](#) to the consultations that were held in the summer and autumn of 2020 on the secondary legislation which will implement the [Space Industry Act 2018](#).

We sought views on the operability and effectiveness of the [draft space industry regulations](#) and associated guidance and supporting documents ([July](#)), as well as the government's approach to liabilities, insurance and charging ([October](#)).

We also asked respondents to provide evidence and test the assumptions in the consultation-stage impact assessment.

This government is committed to growing the space industry in the UK and cementing our leading role in this sector by unlocking a new era in commercial spaceflight across the UK.

The draft space industry regulations, together with draft instruments covering [accident investigation](#) and [appeals](#), will pave the way for a new commercial licensing regime for spaceflight activities from UK.

It will support safe and sustainable activities that will drive research, innovation and entrepreneurship, exploiting the unique environment of space.

This will feed into our emerging [national space strategy](#) as we develop our priorities for levelling up the UK and promote the growth of this thriving sector in the long term.

We also recognise the importance of ensuring that the environment is protected from the adverse effects of spaceflight activities.

This is why the Space Industry Act 2018 requires applicants for a launch or spaceport licence to submit an assessment of environmental effects as part of their application.

We also published a [consultation on 10 February 2021](#) setting specific environmental objectives for the spaceflight regulator to take account of when considering these assessments, reinforcing government's wider policies towards the environment and sustainability.

Our spaceflight legislation has been designed from the outset to support commercial operations. This, together with the [Technology Safeguards Agreement](#) signed with the US in June 2020, means that the UK is well-placed to attract new commercial opportunities in this rapidly growing sector.

Together with industry, we set a target to grow the UK's share of the global space market to 10% by 2030. Today we are a step closer to reaching this goal.

The government welcomes the thoughtful and detailed responses received from across the 4 nations of the UK. Invaluable insights were provided by those who responded to the consultation and included enthusiastic responses from schoolchildren.

We're pleased to report that our modern regulatory framework was supported by the vast majority of respondents with many applauding the flexibility of our proposed approach, which fosters adaptability through an outcomes-based focus.

The response I have shared sets out the ways we've adjusted the draft space industry regulations and associated guidance material to reflect, and where possible accommodate, the suggestions and recommendations made through the consultation process.

We believe that this collaborative approach will not only strengthen the licensing regime we're implementing but also demonstrates the government's ongoing commitment to growing this exciting sector.

My department has worked closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the UK Space Agency and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to legislate for a wide range of new commercial spaceflight technologies, including:

- traditional vertically launched vehicles
- air-launched vehicles
- sub-orbital spaceplanes and balloons

It's our intention to bring this legislation before the House later this year.

Next steps

Following the publication of the government's response, I'll update the House once we're ready to submit the secondary legislation for Parliamentary scrutiny.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Supporting the reopening of outdoor hospitality](#)

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UN Human Rights Council 46: UK statement on freedom of religion and belief

Thank you, Madam President,

We remain deeply concerned about the scale of abuses and violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief: no one should suffer because of their conscience.

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his work over the past five years, and look forward to engaging with him on his report on combatting anti-Muslim hatred, as well as on Christian persecution and other forms of discrimination.

The United Kingdom is home to many thriving religions and beliefs. We reject all forms of intolerance and hate. Internationally, we are concerned by the societal impacts of the pandemic including rising hate speech, misinformation and conspiracy theories which target minority faith communities in different countries.

We are also concerned about actions of governments such as Sri Lanka, where the government's mandatory cremation policy for those deceased due to Covid-19 has impacted Muslim and Christian minorities in particular. We hope this practice will soon cease and we are ready to provide technical support and evidence to counter misinformation.

This year, we will continue to assess the pandemic's impact on human rights.

What steps can we, the international community, take to ensure it does not fuel further global intolerance towards religious and belief minorities?

Thank you.

NHS launches 'Op Courage' veterans'

mental health service

Doctors, nurses and other NHS staff will work with military charities to provide therapy, rehab services and, in extreme cases, inpatient care to hundreds of former soldiers, sailors and RAF personnel each year.

Those needing urgent help will receive a same day referral.

The “high intensity” treatment has already been trialled in some areas and will be rolled out across the country by next month as part of Op Courage, which brings together specialist services for veterans.

Involving charities will help NHS staff to understand the experiences and issues faced by those who have risked their lives for their country and may have lost comrades or been injured themselves.

It also helps to integrate veterans with mental ill health back in to everyday life.

Speaking at the annual Kings’ Centre for Military Health Research Veterans’ mental health conference at King’s College London, NHS England chief executive Sir Simon Stevens said:

We owe a special debt of gratitude to those who risk all for their country and the NHS is determined to do its part in honouring that.

Anyone can be affected by mental ill health but armed forces veterans may have seen and experienced things that few others – thankfully – will.

That can create a special set of challenges which working with military charities helps to overcome and that is what is at the heart of Op Courage – ensuring that the NHS is a National Hero Service.

Over the last two years the health service has expanded mental health services as part of the NHS Long Term Plan.

More than 13,000 former troops have benefited from specialist care for lower level problems such as anxiety and depression.

Almost 2,000 more have received help for more complex problems such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The new service, which is expected to treat around 500 people a year, will focus on those in crisis, at risk of self-harm or suicide, or suffering other problems such as homelessness and addiction.

It is being rolled out after trials involving almost 200 former servicemen

and women.

Veterans will be able to access any of the three tiers of treatment from a single Op Courage service in each of the seven NHS regions.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Johnny Mercer, said:

One of the biggest challenges we face with veterans mental healthcare in this country is making sure those who need help know where to turn.

Op Courage, a collaborative piece of work between NHS England and the Office for Veterans Affairs, will provide a clear single route for accessing specialist care.

Looking after our veterans is a national responsibility in which we all have a role to play. We all have a duty to ensure Op Courage is known about and understood up and down this country. Help is available; you can get better. Speak up. Have courage.

Op Courage is part of a nine-point NHS plan to support the Armed Forces.

Other commitments laid out in the plan include ensuring access to quality secondary care, reducing healthcare inequalities, helping with the transition to civilian life and increased support for vets' families, children and carers.

NHS England Director of Health and Justice and Armed Forces, Kate Davies CBE, said:

This is a significant step forward in our work to help the veterans most in need who may have historically slipped through the net and we are excited to outline these nine commitments as part of the NHS Long Term Plan to improve veteran healthcare.

Op Courage is a great initiative that we have developed in collaboration with veterans to bring three mental health services under one umbrella to make it easier to access for the 2.4 million vets around England who may need it.

There are around 2.4 million veterans living in the UK and around one in 20 will suffer from PTSD. A smaller number will have severe and complex mental health needs.

UN Human Rights Council 46: Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

Thank you, Madam President,

The United Kingdom welcomes the Special Rapporteur's report.

Human Rights Defenders play an essential role in promoting the rights of their fellow citizens and make a huge contribution to furthering the development of their countries.

The UK agrees that there is, no more direct an attack on civil society space than the killing of Human Rights Defenders.

We all need to play a role in protecting Human Rights Defenders, both in our own countries and globally, so they can continue to speak out without fear of being attacked or killed.

In July 2019, the UK published 'UK support for Human Rights Defenders' in all six UN languages.

That document sets out the importance of human rights defenders to the UK and what the UK government can and will do to support them.

We will continue to support Human Rights Defenders through our bilateral engagement around the world, and through multilateral organisations.

Our diplomatic network will continue monitoring cases, observing trials, and raising issues with other governments.

Special Rapporteur, what are the most important steps we as States must take to ensure the safety and the freedom of Human Rights Defenders to speak out?