

PM meeting with His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei: 4 February 2020



This afternoon the Prime Minister welcomed His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei to Downing Street to renew a long-standing defence agreement and hold bilateral talks. The leaders agreed on the importance of the close security relationship between the two countries embodied by the 750 UK personnel stationed in Brunei under the terms of the Garrison Agreement. The Prime Minister reaffirmed the UK's commitment to a secure and prosperous South East Asia.

The leaders discussed the UK's upcoming chairmanship of COP26, with the Prime Minister underlining the importance of diversifying energy sources away from fossil fuels. They looked forward to Brunei's chairmanship of ASEAN and expressed a desire to deepen economic ties between the UK and the region.

The Prime Minister raised concerns around the implementation of Brunei's Sharia Penal Code with the Sultan, stressing that it is vital the country upholds the human rights of all its citizens in accordance with international law.

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RAF submarine hunters first touchdown in UK

The RAF's new submarine-hunting Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) has touched down for the first time in the UK.

The aircraft is the first of a new £3 billion programme, including the purchase of nine state-of-the-art Poseidon jets, which will improve the UK's ability to track hostile targets below and above the waves.

Poseidon aircraft will protect the UK's continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent and be central to NATO missions across the North Atlantic, co-operating closely with the US and Norwegian Poseidon fleets.

The UK's purchase of the Poseidon is in response to increased threats such as Russian submarine activity in the Atlantic returning to Cold War levels, while China is also investing heavily in new Arctic facilities, infrastructure and ice-capable ships.

Defence Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan, said:

Our Poseidon fleet will soon join an integrated UK force of fighter jets, ships, submarines, helicopters and highly-trained Royal Marines, ready to operate in Arctic conditions. The UK will not stand by if peace in the Arctic region is threatened.

RAF Lossiemouth's strategic northerly location makes it one of the most important air stations in the UK: already home to half of the UK's Typhoon Force, and now sitting at the heart of our anti-submarine operations.

The Poseidon is designed to carry out extended surveillance missions at high and low altitudes. The aircraft is equipped with cutting-edge sensors which use high-resolution area mapping to find both submarines and surface vessels.

Each aircraft carries sonobuoys which are dropped from the aircraft into the sea to search for enemy submarines, surveying the battlespace under the sea and relaying data back to the aircraft.

Poseidon will also be armed with Harpoon anti-surface ship missiles and Mk 54 torpedoes capable of attacking both surface and sub-surface targets.

Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston, Chief of the Air Staff, said:

The Poseidon MRA1 is a game-changing Maritime Patrol Aircraft. I am delighted and proud to see the 'Pride of Moray' and her crews returning to maritime patrol flying from Scotland, working alongside the Royal Navy to secure our seas and protect our nation.

First Sea Lord, Admiral Tony Radakin, said:

The arrival of the first Poseidon marks a significant upgrade in the UK's ability to conduct anti-submarine operations. This will give the UK the ability to conduct long range patrols and integrate seamlessly with our NATO allies to provide a world-leading capability.

This will maintain operational freedom for our own submarines and apply pressure to those of our potential foes. I look forward to

working with the RAF and our international partners on this superb aircraft.

All nine UK Poseidons will be delivered to the RAF by the end of 2021 and achieve full operational capability from RAF Lossiemouth in 2024. The aircraft will be flown initially by 120 Squadron, the leading anti-submarine warfare squadron in World War 2, with 201 Squadron joining the programme in due course.

Named the 'Pride of Moray', the first UK Poseidon arrived at Kinloss Barracks, used previously by the RAF Nimrod MPA fleet, and now home to the Army's specialist air support engineers, 39 Engineer Regiment.

Poseidon will temporarily operate from Kinloss until October 2020 while £75 million of planned runway and taxiway resurfacing works is completed at Lossiemouth by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation. Routine Typhoon training will also temporarily relocate from Lossiemouth to Kinloss in June and July while the intersection of the runways there is resurfaced.

Michelle Sanders, DE&S P-8A Delivery Team Leader, said:

Seeing the first RAF Poseidon MRA Mk1 landing in the UK is an incredibly proud moment for all of the team at DE&S. Close, collaborative working with colleagues in Air Capability, the US Navy and industry has helped us deliver this very capable aircraft.

Moray's RAF Lossiemouth is one of the most important air stations in the UK: it is already home to four RAF Typhoon squadrons – half of the RAF Typhoon Force – and will become the centre of operations for the UK Poseidon fleet.

UK defence is investing £470 million in upgrading RAF Lossiemouth's infrastructure, including a new £132 million strategic facility for the Poseidon fleet, upgraded runways and operating surfaces, a new Air Traffic Control Tower, upgraded facilities for IX (Bomber) Squadron which moved to Scotland in 2019, new personnel accommodation, upgraded drainage and electrical supplies.

When these developments are complete there will be 550 additional military personnel based at RAF Lossiemouth, taking the total number of military personnel employed there to 2,532.

[Reducing size of government estate](#)

secures more than £2bn

- More than £2bn secured by selling off surplus government sites over the past year
- Size of government estate has dropped by almost a third since 2010
- Reducing size of the government estate makes it more efficient and frees up land for other developments, including new housing
- Sustainability work also means civil servants use 59 per cent less paper than they did in 2010

Latest data released by the Cabinet Office shows the size of the government estate has dropped by almost a third over the past 10 years.

The government's '[State of the Estate 2018-2019](#)' report, which was published today, shows the government estate, which is made up of buildings across the country, is now 30 per cent smaller than it was in 2010.

In the past year alone, 339 former government sites have been disposed of – returning £2.1bn to the public coffers.

Cabinet Office Minister, Jeremy Quin, said:

Reducing the size of the Government estate saves taxpayers money. It also provides opportunities for both the commercial and residential sectors and helps drive efficiency across government.

Over the past year, efforts to reduce the size of the government estate have seen 277,000 square metres of property disposed of – the equivalent of 39 football pitches. The cost of running the estate has also fallen by £50 million a year.

While reducing the size of its estate, the government is also driving an agenda to make the civil service less London-centric. A number of Government Hubs are under development, with civil servants from different departments co-locating outside central London.

Locations for hubs which have already been announced include Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Belfast, Nottingham, Birmingham, Cardiff and Bristol.

John O'Connell, the chief executive of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said:

Taxpayers will be pleased to hear that ministers are getting a grip on the government's massive property portfolio, unleashing land to be used for housing and business developments.

With billions tied up in buildings and prime Whitehall real estate, selling sites is a great way to cut costs for taxpayers, at a time

when the majority of voters want to see more central government offices and jobs moved outside of London.

This should signal the start of a drive for departments to divest themselves of as much underused property as possible.

Examples of government departments which have made large-scale land disposals include the Ministry of Defence, which released almost 4,500 acres of land for housing and commercial use between 2015 and 2019.

As part of a commitment to run the government estate in a more sustainable way, the amount of paper used by civil servants has also dropped by 59 per cent since 2009 and the carbon consumption of the estate has fallen by almost 50 per cent.

The annual 'State of the Estate' report was introduced as part of government's commitments under the 2008 Climate Change Act.

[PHE reaches crucial step in fully sequencing novel coronavirus](#)

Scientists at Public Health England (PHE) are supporting the scientific community as it traces the source of the virus, how it has developed and interventions to help treat it.

The UK was one of the first countries outside China to have an assured testing capability for the novel coronavirus. PHE has since rapidly developed further specific tests in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and a global network of laboratories.

The publication of the sequence by PHE provides valuable information on any mutations in the virus over time and allows an improved understanding of how the virus spreads.

The new sequencing in the UK cases illustrates that so far the virus has not evolved to better infect humans since the sequence was first published by China.

Matt Hancock, Health Secretary said:

I'm proud UK scientists are at the forefront of the global research effort – this is a vital step forward in the international fight against novel coronavirus.

By sequencing this virus's genome we can better understand the

roots of this disease, predict its behaviour, and learn how tackle it. We are excited to share this knowledge across the scientific community and will continue to work closely with partners around the world.

Prof Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director at Public Health England, said:

This is a crucial step in helping us understand this virus. Genome sequencing means that we can see where it came from, how it's developing and determine the interventions that aid treatment.

These data play an integral part in helping the scientific community in tackling this global problem.

[Further review period for A27 Arundel improvements](#)



Announcing the news, Highways England programme leader Jason Hones said:

We've always been upfront that we want to give people the best possible information to help them have their say on options for improving the A27 near Arundel.

We have published a list of corrections to the materials from our consultation last autumn to following a comprehensive review of the documents.

The corrections do not change the overall conclusions of our assessment of the various options presented in the consultation materials, or the design of any of the six proposed scheme options.

We are inviting anyone who gave a response to the consultation and who feels that this update changes their opinion on the proposals

to amend their response to the consultation. We have published a brief explanation alongside each of the errors to help people understand their effect.

The information is available online at the [A27 Arundel webpage](#) and at a number of locations across the area. The period for providing your update lasts for four weeks from Monday 3 February 2020 to Sunday 1 March 2020.

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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