

# News story: Multi-billion-pound deal for early warning radar aircraft

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson has signed a \$1.98Bn deal to purchase five E-7 aircraft.

The E-7 fleet will replace the current Sentry aircraft and ensure the continued delivery of the UK's Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) capability.

Named "Wedgetail" by the Australian Department for Defence, the E-7 aircraft can fly for long periods of time and manage the battlespace from the sky.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The E-7 provides a technological edge in an increasingly complex battlespace, allowing our ships and aircraft to track and target adversaries more effectively than ever. This deal also strengthens our vital military partnership with Australia.

We will operate state-of-the-art F-35 jets and world-class Type-26 warships, and this announcement will help us work even more closely together to tackle the global threats we face.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, said:

Today's announcement about the procurement of five E-7 'Wedgetail' Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft is excellent news for both the RAF and wider Defence. This world-class capability, already proven with our Royal Australian Air Force partners, will significantly enhance our ability to deliver decisive airborne command and control and builds on the reputation of our E3D Sentry Force.

Along with Defence's investment in other cutting-edge aircraft, E-7 will form a core element of the Next Generation Air Force, able to overcome both current and future complex threats.

The new fleet will be able to track multiple airborne and maritime targets at the same time, using the information it gathers to provide situational awareness and direct other assets such as fighter jets and warships.

The E-7 is a proven aircraft that is currently in-service with the Royal

Australian Air Force and has been used on operations in the battle against Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

The E-7 is based on a standard Boeing 737 NG airliner modified to carry a sophisticated Northrop Grumman active electronically-scanned radar. This can cover four million square kilometres over a 10-hour period.

Modification of the aircraft will be carried out in the UK, sustaining over 200 highly skilled jobs at Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group in Cambridge, and there will also be opportunities for British suppliers to be involved in future training and support arrangements.

This announcement builds on a growing military capability and industrial relationship between the UK and Australia, after the Australian government selected the British Type 26 design for its future frigate.

E7 infographic. RAF Copyright.

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## **Press release: Funding awarded to 23 projects to help those affected by alcohol**

Local authorities across the country will use £6 million funding to increase access to alcohol treatments, with a focus on helping parents and rough sleepers.

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## **Press release: New trans-Pennine roads study announced**

The study – due to start in April – will consider what enhancements could be made to road connections between the end of the M65 at Colne and communities like Skipton in North Yorkshire and Keighley and Bradford in West Yorkshire.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

We are investing more than £13 billion to improve transport across the North so people can get around more easily, quickly and safely.

This study is part of our ongoing work to ensure the routes between

Lancashire and Yorkshire are fit for the future – helping link communities better and boosting the economy to supercharge the Northern Powerhouse.

Beyond the M65, there is currently no consistent strategic route for trans-Pennine traffic, with the limited alternative routes suffering from congestion and drivers facing poor journey times given the large distances involved. The M65 route between Preston and Leeds is five miles shorter than journeys via the M62 but takes 40 minutes longer.

The corridor is home to many manufacturing industries which could benefit from improved roads. Investment could boost economic growth not only in East Lancashire, and West and North Yorkshire, but also beyond, across the whole of the North of England; this could support jobs, housing and economic opportunities in the area in line with the aspirations of Transport for the North (TfN), the partnership making the case for pan-Northern strategic transport improvements.

Investment to upgrade this corridor would also help to relieve congestion on the M6 and M60 in the longer term as well as providing greater network resilience.

Highways England Chief Executive Jim O' Sullivan said:

This study will look at the issues currently facing road users in the trans-Pennine corridor, the extent to which the lack of strategic connection hinders growth, and options for improving those journeys and boosting economic growth. It will also look at how improvements could be used to support other trans-Pennine routes such as the M62.

This initial strategic assessment will be followed by analysis of potential options – and will consider the difficult terrain, environmental impacts, economic growth, the role of other modes in the corridor and concerns and aspirations of key road user groups.

Working with TfN, Highways England is aiming to conclude and publish its findings by the end of the autumn, delivering a Strategic Outline Business Case for ministers to consider if there is a case for future investment.

## **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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## **Press release: New trans-Pennine roads study announced**

Highways England is to lead a £300,000 study looking at major improvements to road links between the M65 in East Lancashire and parts of Yorkshire.

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## **News story: Successful workshop on assessment of jelly mini-cups**

### **What is a jelly mini-cup?**

Jelly mini-cup confectionery is defined according to Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008, as “jelly confectionery of a firm consistence, contained in semi rigid mini-cups or mini-capsules, intended to be ingested in a single bite by exerting pressure on the mini-cups or mini-capsule to project the confectionery into the mouth”.

Although the definition seems straightforward, it poses several difficulties, for example what does ‘firm consistence’ mean and how should ‘intended to be ingested in a single bite’ be interpreted? These difficulties have been the basis for disputes and requests for advice for the Government Chemist team for a number of years.

Food additive law bans the use of a range of gel-forming compounds in such products to avoid the possibility of ‘plugging’ the airway. Disputes arise, not about the presence of the additives, but about the definition of the product in which they are banned. If a jelly confectionery product conforms to the definition of a jelly mini-cup, it must not contain the banned gel forming additives.

### **Workshop on assessment of jelly cups**

As a consequence of our involvement in assisting the authorities and businesses to interpret the relevant legislation since 2004, we have gathered extensive expertise in the evaluation and assessment of these confectionery items. We organised [a workshop](#) covering advice and guidance to interested groups on the assessment and evaluation that took place on 13 March at LGC in Teddington with the aim of disseminating that expertise.

Michael Walker in the laboratory demonstrating practical aspects of the assessment of jelly mini-cups

The workshop was oversubscribed, attended by 22 delegates representing enforcement offices (Trading Standard Officers and Environmental Health Officers), Public Analysts and traders. The workshop included talks by [Selvarani Elahi](#), [Michael Walker](#) and Ian Axford (expert in Consumer Safety Regulation) and practical sessions in the laboratory. There was a good deal of exchange of information and opinion and the feedback was very positive.

The event helped clarify the thinking about emerging 'borderline compliant' products appearing on the market and enhanced significantly the consistency with which this choking hazard will be regulated in the future.

For more information on the event or the work that we do contact: