

Press release: Dragonfire: Laser Directed Energy Weapons

In January of this year, 2017, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), awarded a contract to the Dragonfire consortium, worth £30million to UK industry, to demonstrate the potential of Laser Directed Energy Weapons (LDEW).

Dstl supplies high-impact science and technology for the defence and security of the UK. Scientists from Dstl, working with industry partners under contract to Dstl, have been working on laser technology since the 1970s, with the intent of realising the benefit of an affordable and precise weapon for the UK military.

Testing of the demonstrator will begin on UK ranges in 2018, culminating in a major demonstration in 2019. The Dragonfire solution is based on unique technical approaches developed in the UK under MOD and industry funding centred on high energy lasers and will address the challenges associated with engaging aerial targets safely. It represents the major element of the Dstl led LDEW project, which draws on expertise across Dstl and contributes to internal collaborative programmes.

UK Dragonfire, led by MBDA in the UK under contract to Dstl, has brought together the best of relevant UK industry expertise to deliver the highly challenging and complex programme. The team capitalises on the strengths of the individual companies involved, which include QinetiQ, Leonardo, GKN, Arke, BAE Systems and Marshall Land Systems.

The LDEW technology provides operational advantage to the UK military and the potential to export such systems in support of the Prosperity agenda, as advocated in the UK's 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, by developing on-shore industrial capability.

Peter Cooper, Dstl's Project Technical Authority for Dragonfire, said:

Dragonfire is the culmination of many years of work in the area of laser directed energy weapons. We are looking forward to the 2019 demonstration and, working with our industry colleagues, we aim provide the UK Armed Forces with innovative, effective and affordable solutions to the emerging threats they face.

Press release: Rod licensing blitz identifies 23 offenders

Environment Agency Officers led a series of rod licence enforcement patrols around various sites in Essex and Norfolk, on the back of intelligence received. They were joined by colleagues from Essex and Norfolk Police forces, the Broads Authority and volunteer bailiffs from the Angling Trust.

Over a total of three days (6, 9 and 10 September 2017), eight Essex fisheries were checked, and one river stretch patrolled in Norfolk (the River Bure).

Officers checked dozens of anglers, stressing the importance of buying a rod licence and explaining how the income is reinvested in fisheries. A total of 224 rod licences were checked and 23 offenders identified (a 10.26% evasion rate).

Lesley Robertson, Enforcement Team Leader at the Environment Agency, said:

These checks were badged under the name Operation Springfield II. The Operation focused on rod licence evasion and raising awareness of the need for anglers to purchase and renew their rod licences.

Our Officers patrol the watercourses all year round, including holidays and weekends. Those who avoid buying a rod licence and are found fishing illegally may face prosecution and a hefty fine. Anglers should ensure they are properly licensed before going out to enjoy this worthwhile hobby.

Essex Police Rural and Heritage Crime Officer, PC Andrew Long, said:

Like other forces across the UK, Essex Police have joined with the Environment Agency and Angling Trust to work together and tackle criminality surrounding theft of fish and unlawful fishing.

This has an impact on one of the country's most popular pastimes, with more than 1.5 million people buying rod licences every year.

Taking part in unlawful fishing can have a detrimental effect on the environment so it's important for us to work in partnership with the Environment Agency and ensure everyone has the correct licence to do this.

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Press release: Employment reaches another record high

Official employment figures released today (13 September 2017) show that there are now a record number of people in work, the highest level since records began in 1971.

The figures, released by the Office of National Statistics, also show that unemployment is at 4.3%, the lowest since 1975.

The increase is due to people of all ages finding work, with employment levels of those over 50 in work reaching a record high, youth unemployment falling by over 40% since 2010 and the proportion of young people who are unemployed and not in full time education dropping below 5% for the first time.

These record figures have been driven by increases in full-time and permanent work. In the last year there has been a shift from part-time to full-time employment, 20,000 fewer people relying on zero hour contracts and full-time and permanent employment are both at a record high.

Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds said:

The strength of the economy is helping people of all ages find work, from someone starting their first job after leaving education, to those who might be starting a new career later in life.

Britain's employment success is largely about a growth in full-time and permanent work, as employers invest in Britain and offer quality job opportunities that put more money into people's pockets.

But there is more to do, and we will continue to build on our achievements through our employment programmes and the work of Jobcentre Plus.

Today's figures also show:

Separate figures show [1.4 million claims have been made to Universal Credit](#). Of the 590,000 people now on Universal Credit, 39% are in work.

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