

Press release: Visitors and wildlife to benefit from East Farleigh lock improvements

The Environment Agency project has refurbished the lock, in East Farleigh near Maidstone, Kent, stabilised the weir, and installed a new fish pass. The previous lock was last refurbished over a century ago, and these improvements enhance and protect the River Medway for local residents and river users.

The refurbished lock was constructed within the existing lock and not only secures the future of the structure but improves the safety and convenience for boaters using it. New features include improved mooring systems, new access steps, and new rubbing timbers and fendering to reduce the risk of damage to visiting vessels.

Wildlife on the River Medway will also benefit from the works at East Farleigh. A new fish pass has been installed alongside the weir, providing climbable slopes for fish wanting to travel upstream, meaning freshwater fish, such as barbel, roach, perch, dace, chub and pike, will be able to pass the site freely.

Julie Foley, Environment Agency Area Manager, said:

The lock refurbishment is a £3.65 million investment in the River Medway that will be a great asset to visitors, river users, and wildlife for many years to come.

With a newly refurbished lock and weir we will be able to continue to maintain the upstream water levels for boaters, anglers, cyclists and walkers to enjoy, and the lock is essential for a number of commercial river operators.

It's great for the river that 9 of the 10 locks on the River Medway now have fish passes in place. Allowing free movement of fish will ensure that it becomes a healthier river than it has been in at least the last 250 years, offering better access to spawning grounds for fish.

For all media enquiries please contact 0800 141 2743 or email Southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk.

News story: SMEs gear up to supply to government through new £3bn tech deal

One hundred SMEs have signed up for the chance to secure a share of an estimated £3bn of IT investment over the next four years – giving them the chance to grow their businesses by helping the government to deliver more efficient, effective public services.

Crown Commercial Service (CCS) has today awarded its new Technology Services 2 framework, with small and medium-sized enterprises representing more than 60% of the total number of suppliers signed up.

CCS is estimating that the framework will help public bodies to save more than £180 million over four years – money that can be spent on delivering frontline services.

Niall Quinn, Director, Technology Strategic Category for CCS says:

This framework delivers significant commercial benefits and gives more SMEs than ever the chance to deliver specialist technology support to the UK public sector.

Up to £3bn is expected to be spent through the agreement, which links public sector bodies with suppliers that can provide specialist IT services – from the management of a small desktop computer estate to the replacement of critical government systems.

160 suppliers have been awarded places on the framework, with 100 of them SMEs. There are twice as many suppliers on the new agreement compared to its previous iteration – Technology Services – giving more businesses than ever a chance to supply to government and increasing competition to drive down prices.

The agreement initially runs for two years, with the option to extend by two further years.

The agency innovation

For the first time, the new agreement includes an ‘agency’ element.

This gives public sector organisations buying services the option to employ a supplier as an ‘agent’ for their needs – buying in further goods or services through other CCS frameworks including Technology Products 2.

This gives customers a ‘one stop shop’ option to fully satisfy their requirements.

CCS will also be supporting small businesses who are new to working with

government with regular introductory webinars and self-help videos on CCS systems and processes.

Lotting structure

- Lot 1 – Technology Strategy & Service Design
- Lot 2 – Transition and Transformation
- Lot 3 – Operational Services
- Lot 4 – Programmes and Large Projects (2 sub Lots)
- 4a: Government Official security classification
- 4b: Above government Official classification (government Secret and Top Secret classifications)

To find out more, visit [the Crown Commercial Service procurement pipeline](#).

News story: Ambitious future for Naval Shipbuilding in the UK

Sir John Parker's independent report into British naval shipbuilding proposed far-reaching recommendations to transform the UK maritime industry and boost the prosperity of regions, shipyards and maritime supply chains across the country.

Today's Strategy sees the Government accept Sir John's recommendations and step up to what he called a prospective 'renaissance' in British shipbuilding. Building on the Government's industrial strategy, it outlines an ambition to transform the procurement of naval ships, make the UK's maritime industry more competitive, grow the Royal Navy fleet by the 2030s, export British ships overseas, and boost innovation, skills, jobs, and productivity across the UK.

It announces the government's plan to procure new Type 31e General Purpose Frigates. A price cap has been set of no more than £250M each for the first batch of five frigates. In line with standing UK policy on warships they will be built in the UK. They could be built in a way which could see them shared between yards and assembled at a central hub. The first ships are set to be in service by 2023. Shipyards will be encouraged to work with global partners to ensure the vessel is competitive on the export market.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

This new approach will lead to more cutting-edge ships for the growing Royal Navy that will be designed to maximise exports and be attractive to navies around the world.

Backed up by a commitment to spend billions on new ships, our plan will help boost jobs, skills, and growth in shipyards and the supply chain across the UK.

The Strategy sets out the government's commitment to work with industry to reinvigorate and maximise export success. The Type 31e will be designed to meet the needs of the Royal Navy and with the export market in mind from the beginning. This could see industry's customer become not only the Royal Navy but for the navies of Britain's allies and partners.

The MOD is committed to new ships for the Royal Navy through its rising budget and £178bn equipment plan. In July, at BAE's Govan shipyard, the Defence Secretary cut steel for the first of eight Type 26 frigates, HMS Glasgow. The £3.7 billion contract for the first three, the largest for naval ships this decade, will secure hundreds of high skilled jobs on the Clyde until 2035 and hundreds more in the supply chain across the UK.

Sir John Parker said:

I am very impressed by the courage that the Secretary of State has shown – and the Government – in adopting my recommendations, which were very extensive, and will change the shape of naval shipbuilding over the country in the future.

The next challenge is to come up with a world-leading design; one that can satisfy the needs of the Royal Navy and the export market. We have the capability to do that, the will is there and it is a tremendous opportunity for UK shipbuilding. I see no reason why industry will not rise to that challenge. There is an incredible keenness from around the country, from Scotland to Merseyside, to the South West and over to Belfast.

The option to build the Type 31e frigates in blocks reflects how the biggest ship ever built for the Royal Navy, the 65,000-tonne HMS Queen Elizabeth, was constructed. The aircraft carrier was built in blocks by over 10,000 people in six main British cities. She was then assembled in Rosyth, before commencing sea trials in June and arriving in her home port of Portsmouth last month.

Her sister ship HMS Prince of Wales, built in the same way, is also now structurally complete and will be officially named in a ceremony on 8 September. This method has also been tried and tested on the UK's new polar research ship, RRS Sir David Attenborough, with shipyards across the country collaborating in the block build.

The Strategy is an important part of the government's broader industrial strategy that focuses on increasing economic growth across the country and investing in a more skilled workforce.

The Government will work together with industry to provide the certainty and

support the need to become internationally competitive. Such a move will not only boost the British economy and jobs, but it will also help to create a more stable and well-protected world.

News story: ACMD warns ministers of falling local funding for drug treatment services

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD), which advises the government on drugs of misuse and their harmful effects, found that maintaining funding of drug treatment services is essential to preventing drug-related death and drug-driven crime in communities. However, money available for both youth and adult substance misuse services has fallen in recent years.

The ACMD heard evidence of examples of funding reductions in local areas in England, brought about through variations to existing contracts and re-procurement of local services. For example, one local authority re-procured its substance misuse services to achieve 32% 'cost-efficiencies' over a five-year contract.

The report says the ACMD is concerned that such a loss of funding would result in the dismantling of a drug misuse treatment system that has brought huge improvement to the lives of people with drug and alcohol problems. If resources are spread too thinly, the report says, the effectiveness of drug treatment will suffer, which could lead to increased levels of blood-borne viruses, drug-related deaths and drug-driven crime in communities.

Annette Dale-Perera, chair of the ACMD's Recovery Committee, said:

A lack of spending on drug treatment is short-sighted and a catalyst for disaster. England had built a world class drug treatment system, with fast access to free, good quality drug treatment.

This system is now being dismantled due to reductions in resources. Unless government protect funding, the new drug strategy aspiration of 'effectively funded and commissioned [drug treatment] services' will be compromised.

The ACMD received evidence that further reductions in resources were likely because of future savings to the overall public health grant, as outlined by Public Health England. The report also found that disruptive and frequent re-

procurement of resources was draining vital resources and resulting in poorer recovery outcomes.

It adds that in the complex and changing context it is difficult to see how current levels of drug, and also alcohol, misuse treatment coverage and outcomes can be maintained without significant extra efforts to protect investment and quality.

In its conclusions the ACMD makes a number of recommendations including:

- drug and alcohol misuse services should be mandated within local authority budgets and/or the commissioning of drug and alcohol treatment placed within NHS commissioning structures
- transparency and clearer financial reporting on local drug misuse treatment services should be increased in order to challenge local disinvestment or falls in treatment penetration
- the drug misuse treatment workforce should be reviewed to strike a balance of qualified and unqualified staff and volunteers required for effective drug misuse treatment services
- links between local healthcare services and local drug treatment systems should be strengthened
- commissioning contracts should be five to ten years in length
- research infrastructure and capacity within the drugs misuse field should be addressed

Notes to editors:

News story: UK sets clear objectives for continued science success

The Government's paper on science and innovation will lay out a range of mechanisms and areas for future collaboration that the UK will seek to discuss with the EU as part of the negotiations on the future partnership.

It also considers areas where there are precedents for countries outside the EU to participate in pan-European programmes such as Galileo and Copernicus.

The programmes and mechanisms include space programmes including Space Surveillance and Tracking.

The UK space sector is worth over £11.8 billion to the UK economy, and employs at least 37,000 people around the country. Our work in the European Space Agency has put Tim Peake in space and is enabling us to explore Mars.

The paper will also lay out projects on nuclear research including:

- the Oxfordshire-based JET (Joint European Torus) which is funded by the EU's [Euratom Research](#) and Training programme and supports 1,300 jobs in the UK, 600 of which are highly skilled scientists and engineers; and
- ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor)

The UK will also continue to collaborate with European partners through international organisations that are not part of the EU for example the EUREKA network that helps SMEs collaborate on R&D across borders and the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), the European platform for particle physics and the fundamental laws of nature of which the UK was a founding member.

Other initiatives include the European Medicines Agency and Horizon 2020, which has over 7,300 UK participants so far and has seen many successes through collaboration, including through the Innovative Medicines Initiative:

- Through the SUMMIT project, UK researchers and companies have helped shorten clinical trials on diabetes, making new treatments available to patients sooner
- Through the HYFIVE project the UK together with other EU and international partners has taken hydrogen fuel cell vehicles to market, moving Europe towards a competitive low-carbon economy and providing cleaner air to all
- The UK has worked with other EU and international partners to train young researchers to exploit big data through the LONGPOP project
- Through the PAL project the UK has collaborated to build robots that interact with children to help manage their diabetes.

Secretary of State David Davis said:

As the Prime Minister set out in her Lancaster House speech, a global Britain must be a country that looks to the future. That means being one of the best places in the world for science and innovation.

This paper sends a clear message to the research and innovation community that we value their work and we feel it is crucial that we maintain collaboration with our European partners after we exit.

We want to attract the brightest minds to the UK to build on the already great work being done across the country to ensure that our future is bright and we grow this important sector.

Science Minister Jo Johnson said:

From space exploration and developing better and safer medicines, to nuclear fusion research, the UK and Europe has a long history of

close collaboration to meet the world's great challenges. It's in our mutual benefit to maintain this successful partnership, and this paper clearly outlines our desire to have a full and open discussion with the EU to shape our joint future.

With science and innovation at the heart of our Industrial Strategy and our additional investment of £4.7 billion for research and development, we are ensuring we are best placed to continue being at the forefront of new discoveries, and look forward to continuing that journey with the best minds across Europe.

The UK is a world leader in science and innovation and the paper also states that we want to continue to be a hub for international talent and sets out that it is vital we ensure research communities can continue to access the high level skills that support the science and innovation sector. It will say that the UK will seek to agree a system for continued recognition of professional qualifications, and will continue to welcome the brightest and best after we exit.

The paper makes clear that the Government is committed to maintaining the UK's status as a world leader in science and innovation and strengthening its science and research base, which already includes four of the world's top ten universities, a world class intellectual property regime and more Nobel Laureates than any country outside the United States.

Read [Collaboration on science and innovation: a future partnership paper](#)