

C919 takes to the skies



China's first domestically produced passenger plane completes a high-speed taxi test for the first time in Shanghai, April 16, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

The much-anticipated C919, a single-aisle homegrown passenger jet, will take to the skies for a debut flight on May 5, 2017. The first-time occasion will occur at the Shanghai Pudong International Airport, according to the Shanghai-based manufacturer of the C919, Commercial Aircraft Corp of China (COMAC).

The C919 is a commercial aircraft, built for medium-haul flights, with up to 174 seats and a twin engine. The aircraft will be expected to compete with the updated Airbus A320neo and the new-generation B737 MAX.

Lin Zhijie, an aviation industry analyst and columnist at Carnoc.com, one of China's largest civil aviation web portals, estimated the C919 aircraft would be put into operation between 2020 and 2022.

So far, 23 clients of COMAC have placed 570 orders for the C919, including domestic airlines such as Air China, China Southern and China Eastern, and Hainan Airlines and Sichuan Airlines.

Overseas orders also account for about 10 percent of the total, including airlines from Germany and Thailand, and others from the Asia Pacific region and Africa.

Greens call for emergency intervention into air pollution crisis



3 May 2017

The Green Party is calling for an emergency intervention into the air pollution crisis ahead of the publication of the Government's draft air quality plan [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, spoke at an assembly at a London school this morning and called on the Government to clean up the UK's filthy air, which is linked to 40,000 early deaths every year.

The demand comes as new figures reveal the cost of taking a bus, coach and train has soared while the cost of travelling by car has dropped dramatically between 1980 and 2016 [2].

The cost of motoring, including purchasing a vehicle, has fallen by 20% since 1980, while rail fares have risen by 63% and bus and coach fares are up by 64%.

The High Court ruled on Thursday (April 27) that the Government must publish its draft air pollution plan before May 9 [3].

Bartley said:

"It's astounding the Government had to be forced to reveal its plan for tackling air pollution and squandered taxpayers' money fighting to keep it a secret. Our filthy air is linked to the early deaths of 40,000 people every year and any delay in tackling this crisis is unacceptable.

"The stark difference between the cost of travelling by car and taking public transport lays bare how little this Government cares about tackling the problem at its root. If we keep pushing people into cars instead of promoting rail and public transport, our air is only going to get dirtier and harder for our children to breathe.

"The Green Party is the only party committed to taking immediate action on air pollution, with investment in cycling, walking, electric vehicles and public transport. We'd also properly fund and expand the Clean Air Zone network and introduce a Vehicle Excise Duty for new diesel vehicles alongside a diesel scrappage scheme."

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/02/uk-government-publish-air-pollution-strategy>

2.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-04-25/718544/>

3. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/apr/27/air-pollution-plan-election-campaign-bomb-court-government>

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[Liberal Democrats hit highest ever membership on eve of local elections](#)

The Liberal Democrats have hit their highest ever number of members, eclipsing the high watermark of 101,768 set in 1994.

The landmark comes as Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron heads to Oxford to rally activists for the party's final push of the local election campaign.

More than 14,000 new members have joined the Liberal Democrats in the two weeks since the General Election was called. More than 50,000 members have joined since last year's European referendum and nearly 70,000 since the 2015 General Election.

Tim Farron pledged to build the party to 100,000 members by the end of the parliament as a key pledge during his 2015 leadership campaign – but at that point everyone expected the end of the parliament to be 2020.

Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron said: “We are going into these local elections bigger than ever before, with a clear message and a growing sense of momentum.

[Join the Liberal Democrats](#)

“In many of the counties where these elections are taking place it is the Liberal Democrats who are the main challengers to the Conservatives. Liberal Democrat councillors are the strong opposition to the Conservatives across the country, standing up to them on cuts to schools and elderly care.

“You don't need to agree with us on everything to agree that Britain needs a strong opposition to fight for you and your communities against Tory cuts to our schools, our NHS and our social care services. In county halls just as in Westminster, Liberal Democrats are that strong opposition that Britain needs.”

The General Election.

The 2017 Parliament needs to see through the twin tasks of economic recovery and the successful negotiation of a new relationship with the EU.

Both these mighty tasks were started before. The task of economic rescue began in 2010.

We have seen through the first long part of the recovery, cutting the deficit and creating conditions for many new jobs to be generated. Today many more people are in work, and more have better paid jobs. We now need to raise our sights, to work smarter so more people can be better paid. We need to continue the good progress to getting more people into work. Once in work we need to help them train, improve, and gain promotion. We also need to be encouraging of enterprise, making it easier for people to set up their own businesses, and to grow those businesses.

The task of leaving the EU whilst improving our relationship with Europe began last summer after the vote. We now need to bring people together to back a vision of what an independent UK looks like. It can be so much better. We want to be open to the world and a leader of freer world trade. We want to increase our collaborations on research, culture, investment and enterprise with the whole world, not turn our backs on European joint ventures. We do not wish to close our borders, but to welcome students, tourists, people of talent, executives of large global companies and those with the skills we need at home.

The overriding task is to get the law through to complete our exit from the EU, and to negotiate a friendly Agreement on our future trade and relations with the EU that helps them as well as us. The new Parliament will then need to move on to make those changes to our laws we need to make so that our newfound freedom leads to some improvement. The Conservatives have made clear we do not intend to remove any of the employment rights or environmental protections that have come from the EU, but to incorporate them in UK law. There they are safe, unless a party in the future with a majority wants to amend or change them having stated so in a Manifesto.

We do wish to plan for changes to the current EU laws over fishing and farming. We think we need a fishing policy that is kinder to both our fish and our fishermen than the present policy. We want an agriculture policy that helps UK farmers produce more of our food, and supports landscapes where the farmer has costs to maintain them.

I am conscious that people who voted Remain were worried about possible economic damage. So far the UK economy has continued to grow, to generate

more jobs, and to only suffer the same uptick in inflation that Germany and the USA have suffered, mainly owing to oil prices. I will work tirelessly in the new Parliament if elected to see through policies that put continued growth and prosperity first.

Promoted by Fraser McFarland on behalf of John Redwood, both of 30 Rose Street Wokingham RG40 1XU

[12 trapped in railway tunnel blast confirmed dead](#)

All of the 12 people trapped in a railway tunnel blast in southwest China's Guizhou Province on Tuesday had been confirmed dead after a 14-hour rescue in the gas-filled tunnel failed to find them.

More than 2,000 rescuers and medical workers braved high carbon monoxide density and dust to search for the trapped workers after the blast ripped through the railway tunnel under construction around 2:50 p.m. in Dafang County, leaving 12 people injured and 12 others trapped.

The rescue work ended at 4:45 a.m. Wednesday.

An investigation is still underway. A gas explosion is suspected as the Qishanyan Tunnel under construction is designed to pass through a coal seam.

The 12 injured are in hospital for treatment. None of them has critical injuries.