

Defence demonstrates significant progress made for women in the Armed Forces

Today marks the year anniversary of the recommendations made by Rt. Hon. Sarah Atherton MP in her report '[Protecting Those Who Protect Us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life](#)'. A year on, Defence have taken on these recommendations and introduced an extensive programme of work alongside the work that was already being undertaken to tackle unacceptable sexual behaviour, improve the experience for women in the Armed Forces and build trust in the Service justice System.

Most recently Defence has launched three new measures that provide clearer direction to prevent and address incidents. These are the [Zero Tolerance to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(SEA\) Policy \(JSP 769\)](#), the [Zero Tolerance to Unacceptable Sexual Behaviour: A Victim/Survivor Focused Approach Policy \(2022DIN01-073\)](#) and the [Tackling Sexual Offending in Defence Strategy](#). These policies will ensure that Defence continues tackle unacceptable sexual behaviour and is a place where people are proud to work and have faith in their justice system.

In parallel to the recently published policies, a significant programme of work has been delivered across Defence and were set out in the [Government's Response](#) to Sarah Atherton's Inquiry. This includes training developments, transformation of the Service Complaints system, the stand-up of the Defence Serious Crime Unit HQ, delivery of improvements to uniform and equipment and the Servicewomen's Health Improvement Sprint.

Recruitment

Defence has set a Level of Ambition to achieve a 30% inflow of women to the Armed Forces by 2030. It is recognised that 30% is a very challenging level of ambition, and one which has not yet been achieved by many of our NATO partners. In meeting this ambition, a Whole Force approach has been developed including tailored recruiting activities, women-focussed marketing campaigns and making greater use of Servicewomen as recruiters. Defence, however, recognises that recruitment alone is not enough and recognise that a greater focus on retention, behaviour and inclusion continues to be vital.

Women's Health

As part of the commitment to improving the health and wellbeing for women in the Armed Forces, The Servicewomen's Health Improvement Focus Team (SHIFT) was established to deliver the six-month Women's Health Sprint, bringing together military and civilian skills and experiences to deliver key women's health policies and initiatives. This includes menstruation disposal bags and a urinary support device, which are currently under procurement. Furthermore, a series of blogs on women's health has been published by the SHIFT, with the

aim of normalising the discussion of women's health topics. These have received thousands of views and positive comments from Servicewomen, who feel like their voices are finally being heard and acted upon, and by others who welcome the opportunity to better understand and support their Servicewomen colleagues.

Diversity & Inclusion

A thorough training needs analysis was undertaken and a common standard introduced. Active Bystander Training continues to be an important part of the training offering, with the course being streamed 135,000 times, and we introduced a new Holistic Allies Training package in March 22.

April 22 saw the implementation of Climate assessments across Defence and work continues to upskill our diversity and inclusion Advisers and Practitioners to better support our people

Uniform and Equipment

As part of the pledge to improve the uniform and equipment offerings for women in the Armed Forces the Services have all made amendments to uniform and clothing that address women's sizing, body shape and body changes. This includes the development of the [Narrow Scalable Tactical Vest \(STV\)](#). Wider revisions to uniform and clothing for each of the Services is in progress and rollout will commence in Summer 2022 and complete in 2023.

Service families

In recognition of the requirement to support a modern and diverse workforce, the [UK Armed Forces Families Strategy](#) was launched in January 22. As part of the support to service families there are currently six pilot locations running the [Wraparound Childcare \(WAC\) scheme](#), with full rollout in September 22, with almost 2000 Service children benefitting from before and after school free childcare.

Service Complaint & Service Justice Reform

In June this year we published the [Service Complaint Reform](#) which introduces a range of reforms and improvements to the existing Service Complaints system for Service Personnel. This is a new system that will increase efficiency; make the system more independent through the introduction of Central Admissibility Teams; improve the support available for those who engage with the process and increase trust and confidence in the system and its decision makers.

In order to address the recommendations regarding the investigation of serious crime the [Defence Serious Crime Command](#) was established in April this year and the Defence Serious Crime Unit (DSCU) will be fully operational by December 2022.

Defence continues to build trust in the Service Complaints System and Service Justice System through a revised approach to the [publication of official](#)

[statistics](#). This is part of a commitment to being transparent and continually seeking to develop and improve policies and support to serving personnel.

Understanding behaviours

We have also launched several targeted interventions to enable Defence to improve our understanding of unacceptable behaviours. These have included the implementation of recommendations from the '[Wigston Review into Inappropriate Behaviours](#)' and the subsequent [Gray Review](#). April 22 saw the implementation of Climate assessments across Defence and work continues to upskill our diversity and inclusion Advisers and Practitioners to better support our people.

These delivered measures ensure that Defence continues to be a place where people are proud to work and have faith in their justice system. However, this is only the beginning and we are continuing to develop and improve policies to ensure our brave and dedicated serving personnel are proud to be part of the British Armed Forces.

[Life-size replica rocket lands in London](#)

Thousands of people visited the exhibition, led by the UK Space Agency, as part of the countdown to the first launch by Virgin Orbit from Spaceport Cornwall.

Families took part in a range of exciting, free space-themed activities and hands-on exhibitions, including a Virtual Reality experience offering the opportunity to experience what it's like to be at Mission Control, the chance to try on a real astronaut suit and handle a real meteorite.

Science Minister Nusrat Ghani, who officially opened the event, said:

We are proud to be playing an important part in the first ever satellite launch from UK soil, and we want to harness this incredible opportunity to inspire more young people to consider careers in science, engineering and space.

By establishing the UK as the leading European base to launch small satellites, we can build on our existing strengths in space manufacturing to create new jobs, grow the economy and attract significant investment into our growing space sector.

UK Space Agency Deputy CEO Ian Annett, Squadron Leader Mathew Stannard Chief

Pilot Virgin Orbit, Virgin Orbit CEO Dan Hart, Melissa Thorpe, Head of Spaceport Cornwall, Science Minister Nusrat Ghani, UK Space Agency Director of Commercial Spaceflight Matt Archer, Felicity Buchan MP for Kensington, Dr Julia Knights Deputy Director of the Science Museum and Councillor Emma Will, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Credit: UK Space Agency

Following a successful wet dress rehearsal by Virgin Orbit in the US, the real LauncherOne rocket and its carrier aircraft – an adapted Boeing 747 dubbed “Cosmic Girl”– arrived in the UK last week. The integration of customer satellites into the rocket has been taking place in the newly inaugurated [Space Systems Integration Facility \(SSIF\) at Spaceport Cornwall](#).

The mission, which has been named ‘Start Me Up’ in tribute to the iconic British band, the Rolling Stones, will mark the first orbital launch from the UK, meeting a key ambition of the Government’s National Space Strategy, as well as the first commercial launch from Europe and the first international launch from Virgin Orbit.

Ian Annett, Deputy CEO at the UK Space Agency, said:

Our work to establish launch capabilities in the UK is already bringing new growth through investment and jobs into local communities, and inspiring a new generation of space professionals whether in science, engineering, law and other disciplines.

A strong space sector depends on attracting future talent, so it was fantastic to see so many young people inspired by our full-size replica rocket in the centre of London and the activities this weekend. I hope we have ignited a passion for future space careers in many of them and made people aware of how space contributes to global sustainability and our prosperity as a nation.

Science Minister Nusrat Ghani and UK Space Agency Deputy CEO Ian Annett. Credit: UK Space Agency

The activities were supported by Virgin Orbit, Spaceport Cornwall, the Science Museum, Imperial College London and the Natural History Museum.

Virgin Orbit CEO Dan Hart said:

I’m proud to stand alongside this distinguished group as we strive to bring a historic launch into space from UK soil – the first in many more milestones to come as the United Kingdom enters a new era as a leading space economy, opening up opportunities for the generations of scientists, engineers, and explorers we see here today.

This launch is being enabled through the dedication and hard work of so many, and we at Virgin Orbit are so very honoured to be playing a part in it.

Squadron Leader Mathew Stannard, Chief Pilot, Virgin Orbit, who will pilot the plane that is set to launch the rocket, said:

I'm really excited to be here. Normally rockets are a business – we build it, we ship it, we get it ready, and we launch it. So to actually have a model one here to show people is really cool. Most people come up to you and ask, 'Is this something you're doing in five years time?', but no, we're weeks away from launch now.

The flight manifest includes payloads from seven customers, based in the UK and internationally.

The UK Government's [National Space Strategy](#) sets out how the UK will become the first country in Europe to launch satellites into orbit in 2022. Spaceport Cornwall is one of seven spaceport sites being developed across the UK which will help unleash a wave of innovation and create hundreds of new jobs across the country. All UK launches are subject to receiving a licence from the Civil Aviation Authority.

[Ancient mystery of European eel migration unravelled to help combat decline of critically endangered species](#)

- Environment Agency's world-first research will help combat dramatic decline of the critically endangered European eel
- Adult European Eels tracked to the Sargasso Sea for the first time, unravelling a mystery that has perplexed scientists for centuries
- Journey of the European Eel to its spawning area considered one of the most impressive feats of animal migration observed in nature

A team of researchers led by the Environment Agency have taken a major step forward in solving one of nature's most enduring mysteries – where do European Eels spawn and how do they get there?

Having suffered a 95% decline in numbers returning to Europe's rivers since the 1980s, the European Eel is now a critically endangered species.

But ground-breaking research published this week enables us to better understand the lifecycle of this globally important but little-known species and ensure effective protection measures are put in place to combat their decline.

Project lead and Environment Agency researcher Ros Wright said:

The European Eel is critically endangered so it is important that we solve the mystery surrounding their complete life-cycle to support efforts to protect the spawning area of this important species.

This is the first time we've been able to track eels to the Sargasso Sea and we are delighted we have the first direct evidence of adult European eels reaching their spawning area. Their journey will reveal information about eel migration that has never been known before.

The journey of European eels to their breeding place in the Sargasso Sea is up to 10,000km and considered one of the most impressive feats of animal migration observed in nature. It's a mystery that has perplexed scientists for centuries, with the first recorded evidence of scientists looking into this phenomenon dating back to the 4th century BC.

Working alongside the Zoological Society of London, Defra, Cefas, Natural England, the University of Azores and the Denmark University of Technology, the Environment Agency has produced the first ever direct evidence of European eels navigating the last 2,500km leg of their journey. Up until this point, no eggs or eels had been found to confirm this spawning ground.

Back in December 2018 and 2019, researchers fitted 26 large female European eels with satellite tags and released them from the Azores into the Atlantic Ocean. The Azores islands are close to the furthest known point on the eel migration route that was tracked by previous projects.

Programmed to detach and transmit their data after 6-12 months, data were received from 23 satellite tags at various stages of the journey, with six tagged eels reaching the Sargasso Sea. Data transmitted from these tags reveal the eels migrated consistently towards the Sargasso Sea and, remarkably, that this journey to their breeding grounds takes over a year.

Once eels spawn in the Sargasso Sea, their larvae return to the UK and other European waters via a different route, carried on ocean currents on the North Atlantic Drift. They then migrate into rivers as glass eels.

Unravelling the navigation mechanisms, routes taken and locating where eels spawn is critical for understanding the reasons behind their decline and putting in place targeted conservation measures to protect this globally important species.

Chair of the IUCN Anguillid Eel Specialist Group, Matthew Gollock from the Zoological Society of London said:

Populations of the European eel are at a historic low and the more we understand their life-history, the better we are able to develop conservation measures to address the critical status of the species.

Professor José Manuel N. Azevedo from the University of the Azores said:

This discovery emphasizes the role of the Azores in the life cycle of eels. It will help scientist and conservationists to push for measures to restore eel habitats across the archipelago.

The Environment Agency and partners will now conduct a deeper analysis of the satellite tag data to uncover further clues on how eels navigate to their spawning area. This is part of an ongoing project and field teams have returned to the Azores to satellite tag eels with extended life tags to reveal more data on silver eel migration and spawning sites in the Sargasso Sea.

The Environment Agency continue to carry out research on all life stages of the European eel to inform conservation measures. This complements work around England to protect eels, for example improving eel pass design to enhance upstream eel passage into our rivers.

A47 – A11 Thickthorn Junction development consent decision announced

The application involves the improvement of the interchange between the A47 and A11, improving access into Norwich. The project consists of two new uni-directional slip roads connecting the A11 south to the A47 east with widening and full signalisation of Thickthorn Interchange the gyratory. The side road strategy will include mitigation measures for the severance issue caused to Cantley Lane South.

The application was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration by National Highways on 31 March 2021 and accepted for Examination on 28 April 2021.

Following an Examination during which the public, Statutory Consultees and Interested Parties were given the opportunity to give evidence to the Examining Authority, recommendations were made to the Secretary of State on 20 June 2022.

This is the 117th Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and 44th transport application to have been examined by The Planning Inspectorate within the timescales laid down in the Planning Act 2008.

The Planning Inspectorate's interim Chief Executive, Navees Rahman said:

"The Planning Inspectorate has now examined more than 100 nationally significant infrastructure projects since the Planning Act 2008 process was introduced, ensuring local communities, the local authority and other interested parties have had the opportunity of being involved in the examination of projects that may affect them.

"The Examining Authority listened and gave full consideration to all local views and the evidence gathered during the Examination before making its recommendation to the Secretary of State."

The decision, the recommendation made by the Examining Authority to the Secretary of State for Transport and the evidence considered by the Examining Authority in reaching its recommendation are publicly available on the project pages of the [National Infrastructure Planning website](#).

ENDS

Journalists wanting further information should contact the Planning Inspectorate Press Office, on 0303 444 5004 or 0303 444 5005 or email: Press.office@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Notes to editors:

The Planning Inspectorate's National Infrastructure Programme of Projects details the proposals which are anticipated to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as applications in the coming months.

It can be viewed at <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

[Water company hit with combined fines of over £1.2m for pollution incidents in East England](#)

Anglian Water has been hit with fines totalling £1,221,000 after it admitted to causing pollution incidents in two separate court cases this week.

The water company was ordered to pay £871,000 after a catalogue of system and maintenance failures caused several incidents of pollution across Cambridgeshire, Buckinghamshire, and Northamptonshire across a five-month spell, between May and September 2019.

The list of process failures included reporting delays, faulty screening and a general breakdown in planning and maintenance, all of which caused damaging blockages and pollution. After one particular incident, a subsequent biological survey showed dead aquatic invertebrates for 1,500 metres. The court also heard how at one site an unchecked build-up of 'unflushables' such as cotton buds and sanitary pads caused a blockage resulting in discharge of settled sludge into the treated sewage.

The site was originally fitted with a screen to prevent blockages in the process but was removed in 2018. The court heard that increased cleaning had not taken place and no steps taken to reduce the risk of blockages caused by the removal of the screen.

The water company was also ordered to pay £37,605.13 in costs at Loughborough Magistrates (Sep 12).

In a separate court case, heard at Cambridge Magistrates Court, Anglian Water was sentenced to pay £350,000 after a pumped sewer at Bourn Brook at Caldecott, Cambridgeshire, burst for the sixth time in several years. Officers visiting the site in September 2019 found ammonia and low oxygen levels in the water, posing a potential risk to wildlife at the site. Despite efforts from Anglian Water to stop the polluted water from spreading, its methods proved insufficient and a total of 4km of the watercourse was affected for at least five days.

Since 2004 the sewer, which is only 1.5km long, had burst 6 times. The court found that Anglian Water had been too slow in putting in place potential mitigation measures. They only located air valves, designed to reduce stress on the sewer, after the incident took place. These valves had been in place for at least 25 years.

Anglian Water pleaded guilty to causing poisonous, noxious, or polluting matter to enter inland freshwaters without an environmental permit, and were told to pay £28,025.66 in costs as well as a victim surcharge of £181.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

"Serious pollution is a serious crime and I welcome these sentences from the courts.

"The Environment Agency will pursue any water company that fails to uphold the law or protect nature, and will continue to press for the strongest possible penalties for those which do not."