

News story: Cornwall to host world's first commercial deep-space communications station

Goonhilly antenna at night. Credit: Goonhilly Earth Station.

Under a new project Goonhilly, which famously beamed images of the moon landings to millions of television viewers, will be upgraded to enable it to provide deep-space tracking and satellite communication services on a commercial basis. It will be the first time the UK has had the capability to communicate directly with deep-space missions.

Goonhilly LEP

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

"We're working hard to ensure the UK thrives in the commercial space age as part of the Government's Industrial Strategy, so it's fantastic to see the world's first commercial deep space communications network coming to Cornwall.

"The UK Space Agency has played a vital role in supporting this partnership and will continue to work alongside industry, local leaders and international partners to grow the UK's share of the global space market. We already play a significant role in satellite manufacturing, with one in four of the world's telecommunications satellites built in the UK, and want to establish the UK as a world-leading destination for space launch. "

In future, Goonhilly will complement the capability of the European Space Agency (ESA)'s worldwide ground station network, which today comprises seven core stations supporting more than 20 earth, observatory, planetary and exploration spacecraft as well as European launchers.

Goonhilly antenna. Credit: Goonhilly Earth Station.

The contract is being funded through the LEP's Growth Deal with the UK Government, via ESA, including €2 million which comes from the UK Space Agency's investment in ESA. The investment will see ESA working with Goonhilly to upgrade one of its largest antennas, the 32 m-diameter GHY-6 antenna built in 1985, to meet the high-end performance and technology requirements needed by ESA, NASA and private space exploration companies for deep-space communications, including high bit-rate data links.

Colin Baldwin, Head of Local Growth Strategy at the UK Space Agency, said:

"We are delighted that the work the Agency did to support this partnership has come to fruition. We see huge opportunities for the developing space sector in Cornwall and look forward to working with local partners, including

Goonhilly Earth Station and the LEP, as their plans develop.”

The investment will provide a huge boost to Cornwall’s space ambitions. Once the upgrade work is complete, Goonhilly will have the ability to track and control forthcoming robotic and human missions to the Moon and Mars, making a significant technical and economic contribution to European efforts in global space exploration.

During the approximately two-year work to upgrade the 32 m-diameter GHY-6 antenna – which carried the 1985 Live Aid concert around the world shortly after it was built – qualifying tests will be carried out under ESA’s oversight to include tracking of several of the Agency’s deep-space missions, including the Mars Express spacecraft which has been in orbit around the Red Planet since 2003.

Goonhilly CEO Ian Jones said: “We already have a great deal of interest in using the upgraded antenna from our international customer base. This includes space agencies, such as ESA, as well as some of the new private space exploration companies.

“The team here at Goonhilly, along with colleagues at the LEP, ESA and the UK Space Agency, have been working incredibly hard to achieve this fantastic outcome. We now look forward to getting on with the upgrade work which will bring a new expansion of the company.”

The UK’s Local Growth Minister, Jake Berry, said:

“It is very encouraging to see a Local Enterprise Partnership using Government’s Growth Deal funding to support a rapidly growing sector through public and private sector collaboration. This contract will create skilled new jobs in the local area while assuring Cornwall’s place in history for its contribution to space exploration.”

News story: New protection against identity fraud for company directors

- Company directors are twice as likely to be victims of identity fraud, research shows
- New laws will allow directors to remove their personal address from the company register whilst still ensuring transparency at Companies House
- Protection will help to ensure the UK continues to be one of the best places in the world to start a business – a key part of our Industrial Strategy

New laws to help protect company directors from identity fraud and personal harm will be introduced by the Government today (22 February).

The new laws will enable company directors to remove their personal addresses from the UK's official company register on Companies House. Directors must still provide their business address as a legal requirement.

This comes in response to reports that fraudsters are using this publicly available information to pose as company directors to buy products online. There are also concerns the information is leaving company directors vulnerable to violence and intimidation.

They are twice as likely to be the victims of identity fraud, with company directors being victims in one in five recorded cases, according to research by fraud prevention organisation Cifas.

These new regulations will also help to ensure people feel safe when setting up a new business by protecting directors from identity fraud.

Business Minister Andrew Griffiths said:

Through our Industrial Strategy we have set our blueprint for ensuring we build on our reputation as one of the best places in the world to start and grow a business.

These new laws will protect new and existing business owners from potential harm and identity fraud, while ensuring we maintain our high standards of corporate transparency.

Under the new laws, directors can replace their personal addresses with an alternative one, like a company address, where they can be contacted to ensure companies meet their legal requirements.

Currently, personal addresses can only be removed when Companies House and the relevant authorities judge there is a serious risk of violence or intimidation as a result of the company's work.

The new laws will also ensure transparency in legal information as public authorities such as the police, the insolvency service and the pension regulator will still be able to access directors' information, such as their personal address.

The laws will come into force by the end of summer 2018.

[Press release: Changes to EU Withdrawal Bill to be discussed at](#)

Joint Ministerial Committee meeting

Proposed changes to Clause 11 of the EU Withdrawal Bill to ensure all devolved EU powers transfer directly from Brussels to Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh have now been shared with the devolved administrations ahead of a Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) meeting on European Negotiations (EN) in London on Thursday.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, David Lidington MP, who chairs the JMC meeting, said the new proposals represented a considerable offer that he hoped the devolved governments would engage with constructively.

The changes would mean that the vast majority of powers will automatically flow from the EU to the devolved administrations. As the UK government has made clear, we always expected that the process would result in a significant increase in their decision making abilities. The changes would also ensure the UK Government would have the ability to protect the internal UK market where necessary, in a small number of areas.

Speaking ahead of the JMC meeting, David Lidington said:

The proposal that we have put on the table is a considerable offer that I hope the devolved administrations will engage with constructively.

We have worked closely with the devolved administrations to find a way forward that respects the role of the devolved governments and ensures we are able to protect our vital UK internal market, worth around four times as much to Scotland as the EU's.

All sides agree certain areas will require common frameworks – and it's therefore imperative that we don't make life more difficult for businesses and families across the UK as we manage the process of bringing new powers back from the EU.

We have demonstrated a willingness to listen and adapt our approach in order to find an agreed way forward, and we encourage others to do likewise so we can make good progress.

The UK Government has been working extensively with the devolved administrations through the JMC process, as well as bilaterals and significant engagement between officials.

Press release: Middle East Minister condemns violence against innocent Syrians as new report reveals 9 in 10 live in daily fear

A child is assessed for malnutrition in Eastern Ghouta, October 2017.
Picture: Linda Tom/OCHA

The scale of fear and suffering in Syria, as well as the extreme measures people are taking to survive the relentless conflict, has been confirmed by a new report from global aid organisation [Mercy Corps](#), backed by the Department for International Development, which has been released today (22 February 2018).

Speaking at the launch of the report, Middle East Minister Alistair Burt called out the “callous” Asad regime for using food as a weapon of war and announced an emergency UK aid package to provide safe water to 575,000 people in Idlib, where violence against innocent Syrians has intensified in recent weeks.

As the crisis enters its eighth year, the new report reveals that 9 in 10 people live in daily fear for their own safety and the safety of their families.

It finds that military attacks continue to affect millions of innocent men, women and children still living in Syria. They typically experience serious violence – which would result in death, injury or destruction of property – twice a week.

Desperate parents are taking extreme measures, such as selling their homes and sending children to work in order to raise money, while a few have even joined armed groups and forced young daughters into marriage.

Speaking at the launch of the report, Middle East Minister Alistair Burt said:

As the brutal conflict enters its eighth year, this important report lays bare the horrific reality of daily life in Syria. With food still being used as a weapon of war by the callous Asad regime, families are driven to desperate measures to survive and their bravery and resilience are clear.

Millions of innocent Syrian men, women and children rely on UK aid and they need our help now more than ever. That’s why we’re providing an emergency clean water to hundreds of thousands of people that have fled the violence in Idlib, to help keep them

alive and stop the spread of deadly and preventable diseases.

But aid alone is not enough. All parties must stop the bloody violence, protect civilians, respect international law and allow immediate and unhindered access for much needed aid convoys to get to those in need. Whilst the international community works towards a political solution to the conflict, which is in all our interests, emergency aid is the only way to alleviate the crisis inside Syria.

The research shows how civilians have learned to adapt. Although, more than two-thirds of those surveyed have lost their jobs, at least a third of those have been able to find new sources of income.

However, two in three households still don't know where their next meal is coming from, underlining the importance of getting immediate and unfettered aid access to stop people starving.

One family told Mercy Corps that they suffered from poisoning after eating animal fodder because it was the only way they could feed themselves.

Arnaud Quemin, Country Director for Mercy Corps in Syria said:

This study backs up with evidence what we have seen in our daily work in Syria. The resourcefulness of people in the midst of extreme violence is remarkable and a testament to the immense adaptive power of humanity. These are dire events, and yet there are still glimmers of hope.

With the vital support of UK aid, Mercy Corps has been helping Syrians since the war began almost seven years ago, and has saved many lives. We believe that the findings from this report offer us new ways to adapt that support to help Syrians in the best way possible.

Since the conflict began in 2011, 11 million people have fled their homes and 6 million of those are still sheltering inside Syria.

Britain has been at the forefront of the response to the Syria crisis and we have delivered 21 million food rations, 8.8 million relief packages, 3.3 million vaccines against deadly diseases and 8.1 million medical consultations for those in need in Syria.

UK aid continues to provide vital food, water and shelter to those most in need – including in Eastern Ghouta, where 400,000 people are under siege by the Asad regime, and in Idlib, where more than 300,000 people have fled their homes in the last two months.

The package of support announced today will provide fuel and oil to open 49 pumping stations to get clean drinking water to 575,000 people in over 122

villages in Idlib. This will give a vital lifeline to hundreds of thousands that have fled their homes in recent weeks and face death, disease or serious illness without a clean water supply.

It will also send water trucks, hygiene kits and emergency supplies to the most vulnerable people if the fighting intensifies to the point that they cannot get access to the water that they so desperately need.

Notes to editors

1. 'The Wages of War' report published today (Thursday 22 February) was produced by Mercy Corps and is backed by the Department for International Development. It is the result of surveys with 1600 people in more than 120 communities across Syria, including areas under siege. The report can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/2EEypBJ>
2. The UK aid package announced today will provide up to £15 million for an NGO to deliver clean water to people in the region of Idlib. It is a new allocation from the UK's response to the Syria crisis. For safety and security reasons, DFID does not name a number of our partners operating in Syria.
3. The UK is a leading donor in the humanitarian response. To date we have committed over £2.46 billion in humanitarian funding to the region. We have already delivered 20.9 million food rations, 8.8 million relief packages, 3.3 million vaccines against deadly diseases and 8.1 million medical consultations for those in need in Syria.
4. As well as delivering vital aid, we have helped renew United Nations Security Council resolution 2165, which allows aid to be delivered cross-border into Syria without the consent of the regime. Since the UK sponsored the resolution in 2014, it has allowed desperately needed aid to reach over 3 million people.
5. For more information on the UK's humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/factsheet-the-uks-humanitarian-aid-response-to-the-syria-crisis>
6. Mercy Corps is an independent, neutral and impartial humanitarian organisation with a mandate to deliver urgent aid to civilians in need, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion or political affiliation. For more, visit: <http://www.mercycorps.org.uk>

ENDS

News story: UK ranked 8th least corrupt country in the world

The [Transparency International index](#) (published today – 21 February), drawn up by the leading civil society organisation fighting corruption worldwide, ranks 180 countries on how corrupt a country's public sector is viewed as. In the last year, the UK has moved 2 places from 10th least corrupt in the world to joint 8th.

Drawing on evidence from 13 surveys of business people and expert assessments, the index analysis highlights links between corruption, press freedom and the decline of civil liberties around the world.

Security Minister Ben Wallace said:

I am pleased that Transparency International has ranked UK as one of the least corrupt countries in the world. Our improved position clearly reflects the proactive role this government has taken to combat corruption both at home and abroad.

But we are not complacent and recognise there is more to do. That is why we published the UK's first anti-corruption strategy which establishes an ambitious longer-term commitment to tackle corruption.

I am determined that law enforcement and the government should work together to drive out dirty money and its corrupting effect.

The UK is making concerted efforts to tackle corruption and published the first [UK anti-corruption strategy](#) in December 2017. The strategy contains over 100 fully-resourced commitments to guide government efforts and establishes a 5-year plan to reduce corruption.

The strategy builds upon the UK's strong anti-corruption drive. The UK: was the first G20 country to publish the details of who owns and controls UK companies; was the first G7 country to undergo an international monetary fund fiscal transparency evaluation; and, in 2017, passed the [Criminal Finances Act](#) which established new anti-corruption tools and powers such as Unexplained Wealth Orders. These investigative orders require certain individuals – either politically exposed persons or individuals reasonably suspected of involvement with or connected to serious and organised crime – to explain the source of their wealth, supporting the UK's effort to tackle corruption.

Alongside the department's efforts, the Prime Minister announced the

appointment of John Penrose MP as the new anti-corruption champion. In his role, Mr Penrose will be responsible for challenging and supporting the government in implementing the strategy, as well as promoting the UK's response to corruption both domestically and internationally.