

[Press release: Minister for Africa welcomes new EU sanctions against South Sudan](#)

New European Union sanctions have been [announced](#) today (Friday 2 February), targeting three South Sudanese former and current officials responsible for serious human rights violations and obstructions of the political process.

Paul Malong, Malek Reuben Riak and Michael Makuei Leuth will now be subject to sanctions by all EU member states, effective immediately.

This action comes ahead of the start of new peace talks hosted by Ethiopia in Addis Ababa on Monday 5 February. These talks aim to restart the peace process following the repeated breaches of the cessation of hostilities agreed between South Sudanese government and opposition forces in December 2017.

Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin said:

It is more vital than ever that those undermining the process recognise the price of their actions. The UK has played a leading role in pushing for these sanctions at an EU level and it is right that we are taking tough action against those who continue to act against the interests of the South Sudanese people.

We remain committed to supporting the peace process and urge South Sudan's leaders to participate in good faith to agree a political solution and end the suffering of their people.

Conflict has devastated South Sudan, causing a humanitarian, political and economic crisis. Over one and a half million people are on the brink of famine – twice as many as the same time last year. Over four million people, a third of South Sudan's population, have fled their homes causing Africa's largest refugee crisis.

Further information

[News story: UK to play a major role in](#)

space weather mission concept

Solar loops after eruption. Credit: ESA/ROB.

Space weather occurs when the sun ejects material which can be highly charged, super heated and hazardous to manmade infrastructure and human life in space.

The new mission aims to put a spacecraft at a fixed point away from the line between the sun and the Earth, known as the 5th Lagrange point, so it can monitor for these events and provide an early warning system. Three out of four teams developing the platforms and instruments to support the European Space Agency (ESA) mission are from the UK.

Airbus UK will lead on developing the overall mission, with the focus on mission operations, the spacecraft platform, and on how this interfaces with the instruments. STFC RAL Space will lead the development of instruments to observe the sun and heliosphere and UCL Mullard Space Science Laboratory will lead the development of instruments to make measurements of the solar wind. OHB, from Germany, will lead the fourth consortium, aiming to develop a competing platform, with all proposals to be assessed by ESA.

Supporting the UK's growing space sector is a core part of the government's Industrial Strategy, which aims to bring together the UK's world-class research base with business investment, ensuring we continue to develop the technologies and industries of the future.

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

"This project has the potential for UK space and engineering expertise to help ensure vital communications, navigation and power networks are protected, and is a great example of what we can achieve through continued scientific collaboration with our European partners.

"As set out in the Industrial Strategy, the UK's space sector is going from strength to strength, boosting the economy, employing around 40,000 people and developing innovative services with a global impact."

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

"The UK is a world leader in providing space weather forecasts and this mission will help the Met Office's Space Weather Operations Centre improve this further. It's a great example of the value of our work as a member of ESA to science and industry in the UK."

In 2016 the UK Space Agency committed €22 million, over 4 years, to ESA's Space Situational Awareness (SSA) programme.

Matt Perren, Head of Future Projects at Airbus space in the UK, said:

“A mission to the 5th Lagrange point will significantly enhance our capability to protect our planet against space hazards. We are excited to make available Airbus’ experience as leader of cutting edge solar observation and Lagrangian missions to support ESA and the UK Space Agency in strengthening the resilience of our valuable assets in space and on Earth.”

Dr Richard Cole, who will be managing the study contract at UCL, said:

“UCL has a long track-record in the science of space weather and in building instruments to investigate it. I am very pleased that UCL is able to lead a team of European institutes in developing this important mission that will help us develop an early warning system for space weather and better predict its harmful effects on both ground- and space-based technologies – something we’ve never been able to achieve before.”

Dr Jackie Davies, Consortium Lead for this study at STFC’s RAL Space, said:

“This mission is a fantastic opportunity to apply the extensive scientific and space instrument expertise and heritage here in STFC RAL Space to a growing societal problem. We have been advocates for such a space weather mission over many years, based on RAL Space’s leadership of the pioneering Heliospheric Imager instruments on NASA’s flagship STEREO mission. It is extremely satisfying to achieve this goal and we are now looking forward to the challenge of leading a multi-instrument, multi-national instrumentation development programme.”

Rare extreme space weather could disrupt modern technology by causing geomagnetic storms affecting satellite navigation, shortwave communications and power grids. A recent ESA study estimated the potential socio-economic impact in Europe from a single, extreme space weather event could reach €15 billion. Much of this disruption could be avoided through accurate forecasting.

ESA is planning to select a final design for the spacecraft and its instruments based on the results of these studies, which are due in about 18 months.

[Press release: Camera footage helps secure fisheries conviction](#)

Body worn camera footage captured by Environment Agency officers on patrol has been used to support a conviction for the first time.

Callum Bell, 26, of Lyndsey Street in Houghton-Le-Spring, was fined for obstructing Fisheries Enforcement officers during an incident at Ouston near Chester-le-Street in June last year.

The footage shows Bell using insulting and threatening behaviour towards the two officers as they investigated an illegal fishing offence.

He appeared at Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court on Wednesday, 31 January, where he pleaded guilty to two offences of wilfully obstructing the officers in the execution of their duty, and two offences of using threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour towards the two officers. He was fined £534 and ordered to pay costs of £530.

In a separate offence from the same incident, David Daniel Bilverstone, 23, of Northlands in Chester-le-Street was charged with fishing without a licence. He failed to appear and the case was proved in his absence. He was fined £110 and ordered to pay costs of £180.

Threatening towards officers

Acting on behalf of the Environment Agency, Chris Bunting told the court that on 18 June last year, the enforcement officers were carrying out a patrol of the freshwater lake Ouston Springs. They saw Bilverstone fishing with a rod and Bell seemingly asleep on the bankside.

One of the enforcement officers took Bilverstone aside to fill in an offence report form. He said he goes sea fishing and claimed he didn't know he needed a licence.

At this point Bell awoke and walked towards where the officers were standing by the lake side. It was apparent he was affected by alcohol. He quickly became aggressive and threatening towards the two officers.

He tried to grab the offence report book, threatened to push them in the lake and twice lunged towards one of the officers, trying to grab the officer's baton from its holster. Over the course of several minutes he continued to be verbally abusive, repeatedly swearing and making threats.

Even after the officers had finished dealing with the illegal fishing offence, he continued to shout abuse towards them from across the lake.

When interviewed, Bell said he was drunk and hadn't meant to obstruct the officers. In court, he offered an unreserved apology for his actions.

'Safety of staff is paramount'

Rachael Caldwell, Environment Agency Enforcement Team Leader for the north east, said:

Bell was told on more than one occasion that he was being recorded by the cameras but he continued to be threatening and abusive.

Our officers are doing an important job to ensure people are fishing legally and taking action against those that aren't. The safety of our staff is paramount and they shouldn't have to put up with any kind of abusive or threatening behaviour.

This is the first time cameras worn by our officers have been used to support a conviction. Our preference is to prevent hostility in the first place and I hope this serves as a warning to others that their actions are being recorded and will be used in future court proceedings. Hopefully people will think twice before acting in such a way.

Environment Agency enforcement officers in the north east first trialled the use of body worn cameras last year to help reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour, assaults and threats against staff. It's expected they will be rolled out to teams elsewhere in the country in the coming months.

The cameras – which are the norm among many enforcement agencies – can be used in a variety of ways, including at visits to poor performing waste sites, illegal waste sites, during fisheries and navigation patrols and even during incident response.

Officers must follow clear guidelines on use of the cameras, including telling people they are being filmed, and deleting any footage after a month unless it is used for evidential purposes.

Fishing is free for children under 16, although those aged between 12 and 16 still need a junior licence. For anyone over 16, a full annual licence costs from just £30, with some short term and concessionary licences also available. [You can buy your rod licence online](#)

Press release: 50th Promising Innovative Medicine (PIM) designation granted

The scheme, which launched in 2014, helps to give patients with life threatening or seriously debilitating conditions earlier access to new and innovative treatments.

Medicines developers, including research organisations, can apply for a PIM designation if they have evidence to support that a medicinal product is likely to offer major advantage for patients. Upon designation, the application can then proceed to a scientific opinion assessment which leads to patient access in the NHS.

EAMS is a key part of our commitment to accelerating patient access to innovative treatments and supporting the UK life sciences environment. Between April 2014 and December 2017, 18 positive scientific opinions have

been awarded in a number of different clinical areas with unmet medical need.

Dr Ian Hudson, Chief Executive Officer at MHRA said:

Reaching this milestone means 50 new indications from promising medicinal products have emerged in the last four years alone. As a result, current and future patients will be able to access potentially life-saving drugs that they may not have otherwise had the chance to have.

We are delighted with the success of the scheme, to date, which is part of our priority to ensure, new, good quality, safe and efficacious innovative treatments are available to patients at the earliest opportunity.

Press release: National Citizen Service Trust Chair Campaign

After carefully considering the field of candidates who applied through an open recruitment exercise that was launched in July 2017, the Prime Minister has taken the decision to re-run the competition to appoint the Chair of the National Citizen Service (NCS), under paragraph 3.2 of the Governance Code for Public Appointments.

A new campaign will launch in due course, and will be focused towards identifying a candidate with appropriate commercial experience, or experience of setting direction and supporting an organisation to develop.

Government is committed to the continued development of the NCS programme. The new Chair will lead NCS through a period of organisational change, so it is vital that we find the right candidate for the job.