

[News story: New Shetland radar to better protect UK Northern airspace](#)

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, visited the site of the new £10m Remote Radar Head facility, at Saxa Vord, Unst, Shetland, to inspect its progress.

The radar will improve RAF and NATO understanding of the airspace north of Britain and further out across the Norwegian Sea, improving the UK's sovereign capability at a time of heightened Russian military activity. It will see the island return to the role it performed during the 1960s and 70s, when the site was used as an early warning radar on NATO's northern flank.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We will always protect our skies from Russian aggression. This radar is a vital part of the UK's defences as we react to intensifying global threats and reinforce our ability to tackle them. Russia's actions are not limited to Europe's eastern borders - the threat to British livelihoods is severe and real.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, Chief of the Air Staff, said:

The radar system at Saxa Vord is an important part of ensuring that the RAF can fully protect both the UK's airspace and that of our NATO allies, in the face of increasing pressure from Russia.

Right at the tip of Shetland, Saxa Vord is a very remote site, so I'm extremely grateful to the team who have been working hard through the cold of winter, with snow and 120 mph gales, to ensure that the construction has remained on schedule.

The Saxa Vord Radar head will provide key information on aircraft movements to the north of the UK and feed the nationwide Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) operation which is responsible for policing international and UK airspace from RAF Lossiemouth in Moray and RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire, as well as supporting civil air traffic control.

During the last five years, the RAF has carried out 69 QRA launches. Just last week (15 Jan), two Typhoon aircraft from RAF Lossiemouth were scrambled to intercept two approaching Russian military aircraft which did not respond to the air traffic control authorities.

The RAF monitored the jets as they passed through international airspace, before escorting the Russian Blackjacks out of the UK's area of interest. At no time did the Russian bombers enter UK sovereign airspace.

Defence, Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement organisation, managed the redevelopment of the site and delivered the new infrastructure and capability for the RAF, commissioning the works through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Services. The Saxa Vord remote radar head will be operated remotely by RAF personnel and contractors will only attend the site for maintenance.

Simon Dakin, Director Intelligence Surveillance Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance, for Defence Equipment and Support, said:

The Air Defence and Electronic Warfare Delivery Team has shown outstanding innovation and teamwork to deliver this vital capability ahead of time and within budget.

During his two day visit to Shetland, Sir Stephen Hillier also toured the adjacent Saxa Vord RAF and Exhibition Centre and met representatives from Shetland Islands Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Sullom Voe and Shetland Space Centre Ltd, as well as delivery personnel from FCO Services & ADEWS, Brody-Forbes, 90 SU, Serco, Mobile Met Unit and McDonald Scaffolding.

Scotland is home to more than 10,000 regular and 4,000 reserve armed forces personnel, whilst Scottish industry benefits from defence spending £1.5bn with it each year. This investment supports 9,750 private sector and highly skilled jobs in Scotland.

[News story: Preferred Candidate Selected for Charity Commission Chair](#)

Baroness Stowell of Beeston was Leader of the House of Lords and the Lord Privy Seal until July 2016.

Tina Stowell was made a peer in January 2011 and joined the Government in September the same year. As a junior minister she led the landmark Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act through the House of Lords in 2013 before being promoted to Minister for Communities. She received awards from the Spectator, Stonewall and PinkNews later that year. She was promoted to Leader of the House of Lords and the Lord Privy Seal in 2014 and re-appointed to the same Cabinet post after the 2015 General Election.

Before joining the House of Lords Tina Stowell's career over the previous 25 years crisscrossed government, politics and the media. Until September 2010, she was the BBC's Head of Corporate Affairs. Prior to this, she spent a short spell working for Granada Media, and for David Frost at Paradine, his own independent television and film production company.

She was a civil servant for ten years, working at the Ministry of Defence in London, the British Embassy in Washington and 10 Downing Street from 1991 to 1996. She left the Civil Service at the age of 28 and was awarded the MBE in the 1996 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Baroness Stowell was born and brought up in Beeston, just outside of Nottingham. She attended a local comprehensive and moved to London aged 18 to join the civil service.

In December 2016 she received an Honorary Doctorate from Nottingham University. She is currently a member of the House of Lords Communications Select Committee.

The Charity Commission is the regulator of charities across England and Wales, it maintains the charity register and actively supports our nation's incredible charities to strengthen and grow.

The Select Committee for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport will hold a pre-appointment hearing with Baroness Stowell on 20 February.

The Committee's conclusions will be considered carefully before deciding whether or not to proceed with the appointment.

Notes to Editors

1. The appointment of the [Charity Commission](#) Chair will be made on merit, and following a fair, open, and transparent competition, regulated by the Commissioner for Public appointments.
 2. The appointment will be made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office Governance Code for Public Appointments](#).
 3. Under the Charities Act 2011, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport makes the appointment of the Charity Commission Chair.
 4. The current Charity Commission Chair, William Shawcross, has agreed to extend his tenure until 23 February 2018 when the new chair will take up post. [Read his biography](#).
 5. It is a requirement of the Cabinet Office Governance Code for Public Appointments that the political activity of successful candidates be publicly disclosed. Baroness Stowell has declared that: She was leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Lords from 2014-2016; she has spoken on behalf of the Conservative Party and candidates during elections campaigns; and has canvassed on behalf of the Conservatives during election campaigns.
 6. If her appointment as Charity Commission Chair is confirmed following a hearing by the Select Committee on 20th February, though not a statutory requirement, she has decided to resign immediately her party membership, the Conservative Whip in the House of Lords and become an independent, unaffiliated peer.
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Press release: Ministry of Justice launches new facilities management company

The new company will take over the delivery of the prison Facilities Management (FM) services previously provided by Carillion such as cleaning, reactive maintenance, landscaping and planned building repair work.

Around 1,000 staff, including 100 contractors, who were previously employed by Carillion will now move across to the new company, Gov Facility Services Limited, with their terms and conditions of employment preserved.

These services, which are provided to 52 prison establishments located across South West, South Central, Kent & Sussex, Greater London and East of England, will continue unaffected in the transfer.

Justice Secretary, David Gauke said:

We have robust contingency plans and are taking appropriate action to ensure that the prison FM services continue to operate normally.

I want to reassure staff that their jobs are secure and essential to making prisons safer and more decent.

Permanent Secretary, Richard Heaton said:

The Ministry of Justice's (MOJ) priority is to ensure continuity of service. We are implementing our contingency plan for the prisons facilities management contracts held by Carillion.

This means the work that was undertaken by Carillion will move to a new government-owned company set up for this purpose. I'd like to thank all the Carillion staff who are moving across into the new company, and reassure them that their jobs are secure. The vital work they do to maintain and improve our prisons is greatly valued and appreciated.

The new company has already been created and will take responsibility for the prison FM services as soon as the formal transfer of staff has occurred.

FM is a critical service for Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) and there is an ongoing need for a continuing service.

MOJ and HMPPS will work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure a stable service which retains skilled and knowledgeable staff working on the FM

contracts.

The government has been clear that its priority is to ensure the smooth running of public services. Our robust contingency planning and preparations for the transition to Gov Facility Services Limited has meant there have so far not been any disruptions to prison maintenance.

Press release: Warrington's £34 million flood defence scheme officially complete

More than 2,000 Warrington homes and businesses will benefit from the town's multi-million pound flood defence scheme, officially opened today (26 January) by Environment Agency Chief Executive, Sir James Bevan and the town's Mayor, Councillor Les Morgan.

The scheme is one of the largest value flood defence projects constructed in the region in recent times, and will significantly reduce flood risk to the town which has been no stranger to flooding – given it sits in naturally low-lying land and within the path of the River Mersey and its tributaries.

The £34 million scheme brings increased flood protection to properties in 9 residential and public areas of Warrington, better protecting the hundreds of families and businesses who have experienced flooding in the past and are aware of the destruction it can bring.

Sir James Bevan, Environment Agency Chief Executive, said:

The scheme not only brings flood risk benefits but the work in the area is also good news for walkers, birdwatchers and wildlife. It's been great to see the Environment Agency working together in partnership to better protect Warrington – a fine example of what can be achieved by working with others.

These new flood defences will not only benefit hundreds of homes and businesses in the area but will also safeguard critical infrastructure, vital in keeping the town moving.

Due to the scale and complexity of works, the scheme was delivered in 3 phases – parts of which have been effectively operating for some time. Phase one (the Knutsford Road section) was put to the test during the 2013 December high tides, preventing some 200 properties from being flooded. The predicted value of damage to properties that would have otherwise occurred, covered the

actual cost of this section of the scheme.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Warrington's new £34 million flood scheme will reduce the flood risk to over 2,000 homes and businesses, and protect vital infrastructure helping to bring investment to the area.

This scheme is an excellent example of how working together with councils and local businesses allows us to make the most of government funding to secure the best possible defences for communities. By 2021, we will have invested £47 million in flood defences to better protect 4,280 homes in Cheshire.

Comprising 5km of flood walls and 2.2km of embankment, the 7.2km scheme has improved amenity and recreational opportunities, as well as habitat conditions along the river corridor.

The widening and clearing of formerly impassable footpaths has improved connectivity, as well as views of the river and across the town, and extensive tree planting has created many pleasant vantage points for walkers and cyclists.

At the Twiggeries site behind Kingsway North, a 500m section of Padgate Brook has been realigned to create a more natural look and 5 hectares of reed bed habitat has been established to attract wildlife to the area.

The town's main park, Victoria Park, has seen major improvement works to the main entrance, and a 'wavy-topped' railing along the road frontage at Knutsford Road makes a strong urban design statement.

The scheme was designed not only to be functional but to be aesthetically fitting within its environment. Children from local primary schools were challenged to create the winning artworks that adorn the defence walls, from Kingsway North all the way along Knutsford Road.

Funding for the scheme came from a number of sources. The majority – £29m – came from Government Grant-in-Aid, the remaining came from the partners the Environment Agency worked with to deliver the scheme.

The Environment Agency worked closely with Warrington Borough Council, who contributed £4 million towards the scheme, of which £1 million was 'works in kind'. Scottish Power, who owns and operates a high voltage substation in the Howley area that serves almost half of the town, also contributed £2 million to the scheme to better protect this key piece of Warrington infrastructure.

As well as contributing funding, the Council was a key partner in cementing a strong relationship with stakeholders and landowners within the scheme's footprint.

Councillor Hans Mundry, Warrington Borough Council's executive board member

for public realm, said:

The work done by the Environment Agency will bring peace of mind to many Warrington people as we work together to protect homes and businesses along the Mersey.

It is more than just functional though, as you will see if you take a walk by the river. It is an attractive addition to the waterfront and has improved the ecology and helped protect wildlife in the area.

You can view [aerial drone footage of the Warrington flood defence scheme on YouTube](#).

Drone footage filmed by Suave Air Photos

Press release: Bridging payments for Basic Payment Scheme 2017 confirmed by Farming Minister

More than 93% of farmers in England signed up to the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) have now received their payment. While the RPA continue to pay farmers, those who haven't received their money by the end of March will be offered a bridging payment of 75% in April, Farming Minister George Eustice said today (Friday 26 January).

Payments made to date are worth more than £1.5 billion. The 79,000 farmers who have been paid include a range of claim types and sizes including cross-border, young farmer and common land claims.

Farming Minister George Eustice said:

We have made good progress towards getting payments to farmers this year with over 93 per cent now paid and we are working hard on the final seven per cent.

The burden of EU rules continues to be a barrier to some of the remaining processing so we will ensure that, as we did last year, any farmer not paid by the end of March will receive a bridging Payment in April.

As the Environment Secretary has made clear, when we leave the EU we will

match the £3 billion that farmers currently receive in support from the CAP until 2022, and we intend to go on supporting farmers for years to come where the environmental benefits of that spending are clear.