

News story: UK-France space co-operation at Sandhurst Summit

Artist's impression of the ExoMars rover. Credit: ESA.

The statement focuses on projects for climate action, Mars exploration, space applications and Europe's space programme.

Since the signature of the Brize Norton framework arrangement on 31 January 2014, French-UK space co-operation has achieved many things, notably in the fields of Earth observation and climate action. For example, the UK Space Agency is working with CNES to develop the IASI-NG (Infrared Atmospheric Sounding Interferometer New Generation) instrument for Eumetsat's programme to improve weather forecasts.

An agreement has also been signed to enable the UK space Agency to participate in CNES's contribution to the SWOT (Surface Water & Ocean Topography) mission being pursued jointly with NASA. France and the United Kingdom are also teaming on the MicroCarb programme to monitor and map sources and sinks of carbon gases.

The statement signed today proposes to step up co-operation in space between France and the United Kingdom.

Alice Bunn, Director of International at the UK Space Agency, said:

The UK and France play leading roles in global efforts to explore the solar system and use satellite technologies to improve life on Earth. From missions to Mars to cutting-edge climate measurements from space, we want to build on the successful history of close collaboration for the benefit of both our nations.

Jean-Yves Le Gall, President of CNES, said:

Since the signature of the Brize Norton framework arrangement, space cooperation between France and the United Kingdom has gone from strength to strength. The statement signed today is set to consolidate and extend our collaboration, in particular our joint efforts to tackle climate change through the IASI-NG, SWOT and MicroCarb projects.

Closer cooperation will notably cover work on climate science and space systems in support of the implementation of a Space Climate Observatory (SCO), set out in the Paris Declaration adopted by the world's heads of space agencies at the One Planet Summit.

A future partnership between the two nations on Mars exploration is also under consideration for technology developments in autonomous navigation of the ExoMars mission rover.

In the field of applications and innovations leveraging space data and technologies, CNES and the UK Space Agency are keen to nurture space hubs and ecosystems that will help to support humanitarian relief efforts around the globe in response to the increasing number of natural disasters being fuelled by climate change.

The two nations feel that technical and scientific exchanges should continue in order to further explore areas of possible future cooperation.

News story: Eboracum UK Ltd first private security firm to gain SCC's independent certification

Security firm Eboracum was established in 2011 and now provides a range of services in York. These include security guarding, facilities management and community projects. The company also provide a street ranger service to the York business improvement district.

Body-worn cameras have become important items of equipment and are now deployed with operatives across the company. Supported by local police and the city council enforcement officers, body-worn cameras have enabled the provision of evidence leading to successful prosecutions. Aside from prosecutions, body-worn cameras have also been used to deter assaults on staff and prevent crime. They also inhibit aggressive behaviour.

Recognising the importance of maintaining public trust and confidence when conducting surveillance activity, Eboracum were committed to being transparent in demonstrating high standards and ethical use of their body-worn cameras and therefore decided to undertake voluntary certification assessment against the [surveillance camera code of practice](#), which is regulated by the Surveillance Camera Commissioner, Tony Porter.

The code of practice is intended to ensure that individuals and wider communities have confidence that public body surveillance cameras are deployed to protect and support them, rather than spy on them. The government is keen to encourage organisations to voluntarily adopt the code, which is a mandatory requirement for police forces in England and Wales.

Eboracum's procedures, privacy impact assessment and processes were audited by the Security Systems and Alarms Inspection board (SSAIB).

Eboracum UK has taken steps to ensure that their body-worn CCTV systems operate within a legal framework and meet the standards of the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's code of practice. This includes data security, appropriate usage, control of records and promoting a culture of honesty.

Carl Nickson, Director of Eboracum UK said:

Although accreditation is voluntary, I feel that it is important to demonstrate a transparent and compliant approach to the use of CCTV. We are leading from the front as the first security company to achieve this accolade and I hope that others will follow. Achieving this accreditation outlines that even small to medium businesses can put privacy, compliance and transparency at the top of the agenda.

Tony Porter, Surveillance Camera Commissioner, added:

A key component of my national surveillance camera strategy is to encourage organisations that are not bound by statute to comply with the Secretary of State's code of practice, to voluntarily adopt its provisions. In doing so, Eboracum have demonstrated a real commitment to ensure that the public can have confidence in their use of body-worn surveillance cameras. I congratulate them on their achievement and encourage other organisations to follow their example.

Press release: Dstl Investigates the earth's upper atmosphere

Using specially designed shoebox-sized satellites known as CubeSats, scientists will be able to study the Earth's upper atmosphere and find out how it impacts on radio frequencies through space.

Dr Mike O'Callaghan, Space Programme Manager at Dstl, said:

We're trying to find out how the ionosphere might affect us when we communicate. For example, are signals weaker during specific space weather conditions? It's important to understand the effects and how it might impact our communications around the world, specifically with military operations.

The Wideband Ionospheric Sounder CubeSat Experiment (WISCER) project builds on work carried out by Dstl and the University of Birmingham, which was partly funded by the UK Space Agency. It forms part of a joint programme with the Naval Research Laboratory in the United States (US). Plans are now in place to launch two CubeSat satellites during 2020/21, each with a UK and a US payload.

The UK payload will contain a WISCER antenna and waveform generator that will transmit a signal to a bespoke ground signal receiver, assessing the impact of the ionosphere on the signal. The US payload will measure how electron density changes with altitude. The collaboration offers the opportunity to generate data cost effectively, with both countries potentially sharing results.

Dr O'Callaghan added:

Space is a global endeavour and collaboration is absolutely critical to delivering the WISCER project. We're excited to be launching the project and will be looking at initial results once in orbit.

[video](#)

Here in the UK, Thales Alenia Space has been awarded a contract for £1.5 million to build the WISCER payload and ground signal receiver. Ben Olivier, CEO of Thales Alenia Space, said:

We are delighted to have been selected by Dstl to contribute to this important project, which will ultimately improve the understanding of operating in the space environment. Working with key partners Oxford Space Systems and Teledyne Defence & Space, we will deliver a complete experiment package including mission system engineering.

[News story: OPG updates legal guidance on giving gifts](#)

OPG's [gifting practice note](#) explains the legal framework around giving gifts and has been updated to reflect recent judgements by the [Court of Protection](#).

It also explains the approach OPG takes if deputies or attorneys go beyond their authority to give gifts on behalf of the person they act for.

OPG has separate general [guidance on giving gifts for non-professional deputies and attorneys](#).

Being an attorney or a deputy can be a demanding role – like a part-time job for some – and there are [practice notes covering a range of subjects](#) to help attorneys and deputies be as effective as they can.

Press release: Secretary of State Karen Bradley announces new phase of talks

Since my appointment as Secretary of State I have had a number of discussions on the way forward to restore the Northern Ireland Executive and other political institutions under the Belfast Agreement. What has quickly become clear to me is that time is short and one last opportunity to reach agreement remains.

Without agreement we will be facing a set of political consequences that will represent a significant setback to the progress made since the signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998, almost twenty years ago. Over the past eight months the political parties, particularly the DUP and Sinn Féin, have made progress in closing the gaps existing between them on a range of difficult issues that have prevented the formation of an Executive. The gaps are narrow, but there are still significant differences to overcome. I also want to emphasise the role played by the SDLP, Alliance and the UUP who have made an active and positive contribution to making political progress. Based on my conversations so far, I believe it is possible to reach agreement.

All of the parties have expressed their commitment to the restoration of the Executive. They have indicated to me directly their willingness to engage in a constructive manner to try to reach agreement. A short, intense set of political talks to restore the Executive will therefore commence next Wednesday [24 January 2018].

These will involve the five main parties, the UK Government and the Irish Government in accordance with the well-established three-stranded approach.

Initially, these talks will focus on gaining clarity of understanding on the progress that was made over the last seven months on a range of issues, including formation of the Executive and what are known as legacy issues. Progress must be swift. It is clear that Northern Ireland needs strong devolved government and political leadership. The people of Northern Ireland cannot continue to have their public services suffer by the lack of an Executive and without Ministers making the key policy and budget decisions.

Without an Executive, Northern Ireland's voice on critical issues will not be heard as strongly.

I will be updating Parliament in Westminster no later than 7 February on progress.

Without rapid progress, the UK Government will face significant decisions.

These include setting a budget for 2018/19, the future of MLA pay, the prospect of a further election (which I continue to keep under review) and ultimately other arrangements to ensure that Northern Ireland is able to benefit from the good government that its people both need and deserve.

My clear focus now, however, must be to see devolution restored, an Executive established and the progress that Northern Ireland has made over the past two decades continue. And that is what I intend to do in the coming weeks.