

Research and analysis: ACRE advice: increasing photosynthetic efficiency in wheat trial

This document is the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE's) advice to government in considering a request from Rothamsted Research for a trial of genetically modified (GM) wheat. This research is looking at the impact of the genetic modification in field conditions.

The committee concluded that all appropriate measures have been taken to avoid adverse effects to human health and the environment from the proposed trial.

News story: UK invests in new submarine training school on the Clyde

HM Treasury this week approved the Initial Gate Business Case for the new submarine school to be built at Scotland's largest military establishment this week. Final design approval is expected soon, which will allow work to begin later this year.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

We are now making a long-term investment of hundreds of millions of pounds to improve and upgrade the waterfront at Clyde to make sure it is ready to support the United Kingdom's whole submarine fleet.

As well as a boost to the Scottish economy, this will also bring welcome stability for our personnel, who work hard to help keep Britain safe and secure.

The new schools will provide academic and technical training for all Royal Naval personnel entering the submarine service from 2022. It is an important step for both the Royal Navy and Scotland as it means all submariners' careers, whether afloat or ashore, will be principally conducted from Faslane as part of a £1.3 billion investment in making the Clyde Britain's submarine hub.

All 11 Royal Navy submarines will be based at HMNB Clyde from 2020, seeing

the number of people employed at the base will rise from 6,800 people to 8,200. The school will support the Astute hunter killer submarines, as well as the delivery of training for the new Dreadnought nuclear deterrent boats, which provide the United Kingdom with its continuous nuclear deterrent.

Head of the Submarine Service, Rear Admiral John Weale said:

Our new single integrated operating base will make significant improvements to the work-life balance of our 5,000 submariners.

By putting our boats and training in one place, our submariners can put down roots in Scotland knowing that they are no longer required to commute from one end of the country to another.

The re-location of submarine training from HMS Sultan and HMS Raleigh is consistent with the Better Defence Estate Strategy, published in November, which set out the department's plans sets out plans to achieve a more efficient, modern and capability focused defence estate and bring greater harmony to Service families.

Key milestones in the development of a Submarine Centre of specialisation at HM Naval Base Clyde include:

- A drumbeat of arrivals of the last four Astute class submarines on the Clyde due to be commissioned into the Royal Navy between 2018 and 2024 (eventually replacing the Trafalgar class).
- The move of the last two Trafalgar class submarines, HM Submarines Talent and Triumph, to the Clyde in 2019 and 2020 from Devonport (Plymouth). On current plans, the end of service date for Talent is 2021 and for Triumph is 2022.
- The move of the Submarine Escape Rescue Abandonment and Survivability Training capability from Hampshire to the Clyde by 2019.
- A new Nuclear Support Hub, providing modern standard effluent disposal by 2020 which will remain compliant with Scottish and UK environmental standards.
- The Faslane Nuclear Infrastructure Continuous Availability Programme to replace or refurbish Nuclear Facilities by 2024.
- The four Dreadnought nuclear deterrent submarines will start to arrive at Faslane from the early 2030s (replacing the Vanguard-class boats).

[News story: UK invests in new submarine training school on the Clyde](#)

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[News story: Government property reductions deliver billions to public purse](#)

The government reduced its estate by over 300,000 square metres – the equivalent of seven Wembley stadiums – and delivered running cost savings of £176 million in the last financial year, according to the latest [State of the Estate report](#) from the Cabinet Office.

Speaking today at the 2017 Government Property Conference, Minister for the Constitution Chris Skidmore announced that since 2010, rationalisation of the estate has reduced its size by a quarter, delivering over £1 billion in running costs.

The sale of surplus properties, including Admiralty Arch and the Old War Office, resulted in a further £1 billion in capital receipts in 2015-16 – a notable step towards the pledge to deliver £5 billion in receipts by 2020.

The report shows that vacant space within the central government estate now only represents 1.4% – well below the average in the private sector of 8.9%.

The Minister outlined how the Government Property Unit's pioneering Government Hubs and One Public Estate programmes are revolutionising the way government uses its property to deliver savings to the taxpayer, homes and jobs, whilst revolutionising the way the Civil Service works.

He highlighted the progress made in setting up a new central body that will take ownership of all relevant government land and property. The body, which will be called the Government Property Agency, has an executive team in place and is expected to go live by the end of 2017.

Chris Skidmore, Minister for the Constitution, said:

The progress that we have made over the past year in rationalising the government estate is something that I am very proud of. Not only are the sales and savings that we have made substantial, but the way in which we are managing our buildings will bring about positive, and lasting change.

Whether releasing land for housing, or revolutionising the way in which civil servants work, we can be confident that we are using the government estate in the most productive way possible.

[News story: Major step forward in building a global Britain as public has its say on airport expansion](#)

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has today (2 February 2017) taken a major step forward in preparing Britain for leaving the EU, by publishing proposals for a third runway at Heathrow Airport.

A [national public consultation](#) begins today into one of the UK's most important infrastructure projects which will help build a global Britain.

The planning policy proposals show this government is not only making the big decisions but getting on with delivering them.

This will ensure Britain seizes the opportunity to forge a new role in the world after Brexit, supported by the right infrastructure.

On 25 October 2016, the Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling, confirmed that the [government's preferred scheme](#) for adding new runway capacity in the south-east is through a new north-west runway at Heathrow Airport, in line with the recommendation made by the independent Airports Commission, and that the policy for this would be brought forward by way of a draft national policy statement (NPS) which would be subject to public consultation.

This move, taken for the country as a whole, will ensure Britain has the connections it needs to thrive in the global market, sending a clear signal that Britain is open for business, and we are creating an economy that works for everyone.

The government's draft NPS, [Airports National Policy Statement: new runway capacity and infrastructure at airports in the south-east of England](#), lays down the planning policy framework which the applicant for a new north-west runway would have to comply with in order to get development consent. It also sets out the need for additional airport capacity in the south-east and the reasons why a north-west runway at Heathrow is the government's preferred scheme.

An NPS is more appropriate for this proposed development because it provides clarity, is speedier and less costly to the taxpayer.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Aviation expansion is important for the UK both in boosting our economy and jobs and promoting us on the world stage.

Leaving the EU is a new chapter for Britain and provides us with a great opportunity to forge a new role in the world. We are determined to seize that opportunity and having the right infrastructure in place will allow us to build a more global Britain.

By backing the north-west runway at Heathrow airport and publishing our proposals, we are sending a clear signal that when we leave the EU, we are open for business.

The national policy statement is a big step forward for what is one of the UK's most important, major infrastructure projects. Now we want to hear your views on it. This is an important consultation and I encourage everybody to get involved across the country.

The draft NPS is now open to a 16-week extensive public consultation to ensure people have the opportunity to contribute their views. The Secretary

of State for Transport will use the NPS as the basis for making decisions on any future development consent application for a new north-west runway at Heathrow Airport.

Although the NPS will apply to England only, given the national significance of a north-west runway at Heathrow, the government is consulting across the UK. This will include people who could benefit from expansion at Heathrow and communities who may be directly affected by expansion.

During the consultation, there will be a series of local information events. Around the airport, there will be 20 one-day events for members of the public. There will be a further 13 events taking place in the nations and regions across the UK for business, industry and other interested parties.

At the same time, and as required by the Planning Act 2008, a period of Parliamentary scrutiny will begin for the draft NPS, ending in 2017. Following consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny, a final airports NPS is expected to be laid before Parliament for debate and vote in winter 2017-18.

The draft NPS sets out the measures with which Heathrow Airport Ltd will have to comply in order to get development consent. These include:

- demonstrating it has worked constructively with airlines on domestic connectivity – the government expects Heathrow to add 6 more domestic routes across the UK by 2030; Belfast International, Liverpool, Newquay, Humberside, Prestwick and Durham Tees Valley, bringing the total to 14
- providing a world-class package of support for communities affected by expansion including noise insulation for homes and schools and improvements to public facilities
- putting in place measures to mitigate the impacts of noise including legally binding noise targets, periods of predictable respite and a ban of 6 and a half hours on scheduled night flights
- implementing measures to deliver on its commitments of no increase in airport related road traffic and more than half of passengers using public transport to access the airport
- honouring its commitment of paying home owners 25% above market value rate plus costs for the compulsory purchase of their homes if needed to make way for the new runway

Key benefits of the new north-west runway are expected to be:

- a £61 billion boost to the UK economy over 60 years
- tens of thousands of additional local jobs by 2030
- an additional 260,000 flights a year, with an extra 16 million long haul seats for passengers travelling from UK airports in 2040
- reduced fares, fewer delays and more daily destinations for passengers

[Benefits of Heathrow expansion](#)

Heathrow is already the UK's biggest freight port by value and a new runway will provide a post-Brexit boost for exports. Heathrow's expansion will open up new links between the UK and markets around the world. It will connect UK

goods and services to global customers and make the UK a more attractive location for inward investment.

We are building on Heathrow's pledges on compensation to put forward a world-class package worth up to £2.6 billion. Planning consent will only be granted if the new runway can be delivered within existing air quality limits and climate change obligations. Proposals for expansion also include a 6 and a half hour ban on scheduled night flights for the first time.

The government has appointed [Sir Jeremy Sullivan](#), the former Lord Justice of Appeal, to independently oversee the consultation process and ensure it is run fairly.

Airspace and noise consultation

Alongside the draft NPS, the government has also published today separate proposals to modernise the way UK airspace is managed. This consultation; [UK airspace policy: a framework for balanced decisions on the design and use of airspace](#) is seeking views on how aircraft noise is managed effectively while updating airspace policies. Proposals will look at how the number of aircraft entering and leaving our airspace can be managed effectively – using the latest technology to make airspace more efficient, reducing the need for stacking and making journeys faster and more environmentally friendly. They will also include draft guidance on how noise impacts should be assessed and used to inform decisions on airspace.

The consultation also includes proposals on the role of an Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise, which we will establish. The commission would build relationships between industry and communities and ensure an even fairer process for making changes to the use of airspace and flight paths.

These proposals will influence decisions taken later in the planning process for a north-west runway at Heathrow, including how local communities can have their say on airspace matters and how impacts on them are taken into account.

Both consultations start from today and last for 16 weeks, closing on 25 May 2017.

Public consultation events are taking place across the country.

Cranford agreement

The government has today [granted planning permission for works at Heathrow Airport](#) which, when complete, will enable full use of both runways subsequent to the government's earlier decision to end the 'Cranford agreement'. These works will result in a fairer distribution of aircraft noise in built-up areas close to Heathrow Airport. They do not allow for any increase in the number of permitted movements from the airport.