

# UK and partners publish vision for responsible space operations

The UK, alongside partner countries within the Combined Space Operations Initiative (CSpO), has [published a vision](#) affirming a shared commitment to lead as responsible actors in space, while protecting and defending against hostile space activities.

Presenting a shared vision for the next decade, the publication outlines the guiding principles and purpose of the initiative, which comprises Australia, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The document – co-drafted by all seven nations – recognises space as integral to everyday civilian life, as well as modern multi-domain military operations. It sets out a shared desire to accelerate and improve CSpO partners' ability to conduct combined military space operations, as responsible space actors, in order to increase security and prevent escalation in space and on Earth.

**Air Vice-Marshal Harvey Smyth, Director of the MOD Space Directorate, said:**

Through the sharing of intelligence, information, and training with allies and partners, we can be greater than the sum of our parts in our joint pursuit for a safe and secure space domain. Vision 2031 allows us to share the latest knowledge on policy, capabilities and operations, which will help us to deliver the Defence Space Strategy and strive to create a professional, highly skilled, and energised space community across Defence.

The vision aligns with the [Defence Space Strategy](#) (DSS), released in February 2022, outlining how an additional £1.4 billion investment in Defence Space will protect the UK's national interests in an era of ever-growing threats, as well as stimulating growth and innovation across the sector. The DSS set out how the UK will collaborate further with CSpO, the Five Eyes partners, NATO, and other like-minded nations, as we deliver shared space operations, architectures, and capabilities.

In doing so, the UK and its partners will prevent escalation, deter hostile activities, optimise resources and enhance mission assurance and resilience – preserving the UK's strategic advantage in the space domain.

The Principals Board of the Combined Space Operations Initiative last met at Cape Canaveral in Florida in December 2021. During this event Defence leaders highlighted the importance of developing a shared understanding of the responsible uses of space, discussed opportunities for interoperability of

space systems, and explored ways to enhance collaboration between the partners' respective space operations centres, including the UK Space Operations Centre located at RAF High Wycombe.

This vision reinforces objectives outlined in the [2021 Integrated Review](#): to build resilience, shape the international order of the future; sustain strategic advantage through science and technology; and strengthen security and defence at home and overseas.

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## [PM call with President Macron: 22 February 2022](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to French President Emmanuel Macron.



The Prime Minister spoke to French President Emmanuel Macron this afternoon about the chilling developments in Ukraine last night.

The Prime Minister updated President Macron on the new sanctions he unveiled against Russia today, and the leaders agreed they needed to continue to work in lockstep to target Russian individuals and entities bankrolling President Putin's aggressive approach.

The Prime Minister said that President Putin's actions were a gross violation of international law, and by sending forces into Eastern Ukraine he had ripped up the Budapest and Minsk agreements.

Russia's actions don't just threaten Ukraine's sovereignty, but are a blatant attack on freedom and democracy, the leaders agreed.

The pair reiterated that together, the UK and France were working to reinforce Europe's borders and defend European security against increasing Russian aggression.

Both agreed to stay in close contact and speak again in the coming days.

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## [Environment Secretary speech at NFU Conference 22 February 2022](#)

The last time I stood on this stage addressing the NFU was two years ago. And of course since then, we've had two years of extraordinary disruption with the COVID pandemic. I wanted to first of all recognise the phenomenal efforts of the food and farming industry in helping us deal with that pandemic, particularly early on when we had that panic buying episode.

The efforts of the industry to deal with some of the stresses and strains in the supply chain was truly extraordinary. I want to take this opportunity to thank both Minette and Terry and the whole team at the NFU, for all the work and engagement that they gave us during that difficult period, and indeed since.

I also want to thank the NFU and Minette's team for the work that they've done with Defra, helping to develop our future policy. Because this is an area that despite the distractions of the pandemic, we have maintained progress and we have maintained the delivery of the changes that we want to see during the agricultural transition.

And I know that this week, Minette has published the blueprint for the future of agriculture.

That blueprint document is absolutely right when it says that food production and environmental protection must go hand in hand. I've always maintained that they are two sides of the same coin. We want sustainable agriculture. So we want to work with farmers to deliver some of the environmental ambitions that we have.

And the context in which we operate is one of change. Agricultural commodity prices have always been driven principally by oil and gas prices, and by exchange rates and since 2016, we have seen some good healthy rises in some of our commodity prices. Beef and lamb prices are pushing towards new highs. And more recently, we've also seen a welcome recovery in the prices of some of our cereal crops.

Now as a result of this, farm incomes have been boosted in recent years. Some of the changes that we've seen, of course could be tempered. We know that these things go in cycles and commodity prices may indeed fall again. But elements of that change may turn out to be more fundamental and more

structural.

After all, there's also a context in which we have a rising world population set to go to 9 billion by 2050. And the context in which climate change is going to mean that water scarcity becomes an issue in parts of the world, and parts of the world that have good and versatile agricultural land today may find it harder to produce crops in future and that means that the temperate regions of the world, including here in the UK, will find strong demand for the produce that they grow.

But I also recognise that there are challenges as ever with agriculture, and associated with it, that's high oil prices, high gas prices and some really sharp rises in input costs, big rises in fertiliser costs, energy costs rises, the cost of tractor yield rises. I know that these costs will bite on the profit margin of businesses and it will be weighing on the minds of many of you here today.

And as ever, it's also the case that not all sectors are on the up and enjoying the good prices. Indeed, disruption to the markets in China has led to very difficult time for our pig producers over the last 12 months or so. Last October, we responded to the demands of the industry – that they wanted to have a Private Storage Aid Scheme so that they could increase Saturday kills to deal with the backlog and that they wanted to have a temporary visa scheme as well. Both of those are in place.

It is fair to say the uptake of those has not been as good as we'd have liked. But my colleague Victoria Prentis has been working very hard with the NFU and the NPA and the industry to identify ways that we can improve that Private Storage Aid Scheme. And we're also very clear that we took powers in the Agricultural Act for a reason to be able to bring fairness and transparency to supply chains. We've already acted to bring forward regulations in the dairy sector. And we are about to commence a review of the pig market sector with a view to using those powers in the Agriculture Act to ensure that there is fairness in the supply chain in the future.

Now at the heart of our future agriculture policy is a wish to support the choices that individual farm enterprises make. We want to end the top down rule we used to have from the EU, running to hundreds of pages of guidance, and instead the approach is much more modular and more optional where farmers can actually choose what works for their own particular holding and their own particular enterprise and can choose the level of ambition that they would like to adopt in each of those areas.

We've also been clear all along that we want the development of policy to be iterative. We wanted the ability for it to adapt. We wanted the ability to respond to demand from farmers for those policies that work and have the freedom to adjust to those that need further work.

And that is why late last year, we opened the Farming Investment Fund and the small technology grants with an initial pot of £17 million to support investment in farm productivity. Now that fund was heavily oversubscribed. So today I can announce that we are increasing that fund for small technology

grants from £17 million to £48 million, which will enable around 4,000 applications from farmers to proceed successfully.

And today I also want to speak about the [Animal Health and Welfare Pathway](#). Our livestock sectors are world-leading in many respects. We have exported animal genetics around the world down the decades. My grandfather used to export prize winning cattle as far afield as South Africa and the United States and Australia and New Zealand. And to this day, we are still the world leaders in animal genetics. We have Europe's largest sheep sector, and we're one of only three significant producers and exporters in the world.

And we've got internationally competitive poultry and pig sectors. But we also know that the financial performance of all livestock enterprises is heavily linked to animal health and the AHDB have previously done some quite detailed analysis on the cost of animal health problems and endemic diseases to our livestock sectors. They found a cost of over a billion pounds a year for those endemic diseases. Sheep Scab alone costs over £8 million to the sheep sector. Lameness in sheep costs the sector £24 million a year. BVD is estimated to cost our cattle sectors between £14 and £16 million every year.

We also know that in dairy, good production of lameness and good management conditions such as mastitis can significantly reduce costs by up to 15%. And work that's being done by Kingston demonstrates this equates to around £110 pounds of cost saving per cow if you can get those animal health outcomes right.

Now the AHDB as I said has done some really important analytical work here. I know that Nicholas Sapphire's team are revisiting that work and they are doing more work to update some of those figures. I think this is a crucial piece of work.

You also will be aware that we are introducing some changes so that farmers could be much more directly engaged in the strategies planned by the AHDB for sectors in the future. And I encourage all of you to register with the AHDB if you're in those sectors, so that you can take part in their consultation for their next five year programme.

But the [Animal Health and Welfare Pathway](#) is really for those farmers who are in the pursuit of higher profitability through better health outcomes. And it starts with an annual vet visit. Farmers will be able to have a vet of their choice, the family vet that they trust, and the government will pay between £372 and £684 depending on the species – because the cost of test is different – in order to support an annual visit from that vet to the farm. It will remain confidential between the farmer and his vet and that vet will be able to help the farmer put together a plan for improved animal health and improved profitability on their livestock holding.

As part of that plan, it will include some diagnostic tests of key disease. So in cattle, we are particularly interested in the first instance in targeting BBD, in sheep there will be a Drench test to test for resistances to certain worms, and in pigs we will be testing for PRRS which is a growing problem in that particular sector. And this is just the first step because

once farmers are engaged with the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway in future years, we intend to make available grant support, for instance, to improve ventilation, improving buildings and housing so that they can get higher health and welfare outcomes. And also to support the intervention of particular approaches that we know will work.

We've always been clear that we want to change from the old system – the Common Agricultural Policy – to the new system in a gradual way. We want this to be an evolution not a revolution. We've been clear about that from the start. The Agriculture Act actually sets out explicitly a seven year transition period. And this will apply to every element of our policy.

So on the [Sustainable Farming Incentive](#) as you know we've already announced as a first step, there is a soil health module where our farmers can be rewarded for having green cover crops over winter and for doing basic things such as full analysis of each of the areas and each of their soils. In future years we will add modules on hedgerows and on integrated pest management, and we will also provide the opportunity for farmers to do more in each of those modules.

So I know I've heard it said that the payment in this first year is a small payment, the first step. And that is exactly what it is, the first step and I know that there are people who would like it to go faster and to be able to have more of those modules sooner. But you have to understand that the only way we could do that would be to cut the BPS payment faster than we already are. And I'm not sure that is the right thing to do given that we've always promised people that seven year transition.

But we do recognise that there are farmers who want to move faster and embrace things faster and that is why we have also increased payment rates in [Countryside Stewardship](#) by 30% on average, and we are encouraging those farmers who are not already in CS to engage with that programme. And it gives them the opportunity to engage with the schemes more ambitiously than the Sustainable Farming Incentive might enable them to.

And we envisage that Countryside Stewardship will become a stepping stone to [Local Nature Recovery](#) and it will be very easy for farmers to convert the Countryside Stewardship agreements in the future to a future Local Nature Recovery scheme.

We already have 40,000 farmers engaged in Countryside Stewardship, a 40% increase in demand last year. For those of you not engaged I would encourage you to get involved.

So I believe there's a bright future for agriculture and for our part, in Defra, we are committed to designing our future policy with industry. We put in place a principle of co-design with groups of technical experts in each area working with us to design the future policies as we put them in place. We know we won't get everything right in the first step and that why maintaining the ability to adapt and to have an iterative change of policy is also very important.

But I believe there is a bright future for agriculture. We can be internationally competitive. The government wants to support farmers towards that more profitable future and to deliver many of those objectives set out in the NFU's blueprint for the future. Thank you.

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## **New contracts forecast bright future for National Highways weather teams**

The Weather Forecasting Information Service (WFIS) comprises two regional winter season contracts and one all year-round national contract, which will provide National Highways' decision-makers with round-the-clock weather forecasting information to support them in making accurate and timely operational decisions.

The four-year contracts will see the Met Office provide weather advisories and contingency planning forecasts for National Highways' National Traffic Operations Centre (NTOC) in Birmingham, with MetDesk delivering winter service forecasting information in the north and south of England, and DTN in central England.

The new regional contracts will provide weather intelligence for England's strategic road network by providing road maintenance managers with precise location and route-based forecasts. This will help teams make critical informed decisions about weather-related maintenance and management, particularly in adverse weather situations.

James Cross, Weather Forecasting Manager at National Highways, said:

Safety is at the heart of everything we do at National Highways. The comprehensive data provided by our new forecasters gives our teams the confidence they need to ensure that the effects of severe weather on the strategic road network and our customers are mitigated as far as practicable.

The weather forecasts supplied under these contracts provide a robust resource of weather information for our National Traffic Operations Centre and our Asset Delivery area teams.

Between the three contracts, National Highways has access to highly-detailed weather information 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, and during our operational winter season (October to April) the regional forecasting service provides information used as part of the decision-making process to determine when and where to deploy our fleet of gritters. This includes 24-hour forecasts, two-to-10-day forecasts, site specific forecasts and route-based

forecast mapping.

Abigail Oakes, Senior Account Manager at the Met Office, said:

We are delighted to continue our close working relationship with National Highways as a result of winning a four-year contract. Our staff, be that Meteorologists embedded alongside the National Highways team in Birmingham during the winter, or Met Office staff working from Exeter to deliver and support throughout the year, are proud to continue this partnership, helping to keep the strategic road network safe and operating efficiently.

The presence of the Met Office team, working shoulder-to-shoulder with National Highways colleagues at NTOC, allowed for the best possible support for road users during last week's severe weather.

The network was hampered by the impact of Storm Dudley and Storm Eunice, with the latter prompting National Highways to issue a Red Alert in the south of the country, and urging people not to travel.

Andy Giles, MetDesk Managing Director, added:

We are understandably pleased to have been selected for this contract and are already underway with service delivery. MetDesk shares a common vision with National Highways and we look forward to establishing a close, collaborative working relationship over the next few years.

Renny Vandewege, Vice President of Weather Operations at DTN, said:

Our route-based forecasts provide location-specific information along each gritting route and for each route in total. A hyperlocal forecast can help winter road maintenance managers make critical decisions on where, when, and how to grit across one or more road sections. Our meteorologists with extensive road-specific experience also offer alerting and consultations to provide deeper insights when needed.

When severe weather is forecast drivers should follow this advice:

## **In snow and ice**

Drivers should stick to the main roads where they can and only travel if necessary – drivers are also encouraged to make sure they have a snow kit in their vehicle, including an ice scraper and de-icer, warm clothes and blankets and sunglasses to cope with the low winter sun.

## **In high winds**

There's a particular risk to lorries, caravans and motorbikes, so drivers should slow down and avoid using exposed sections of road if possible.

## **In heavy rain**

Drivers should keep well back from the vehicle in front, gradually ease off the accelerator if the steering becomes unresponsive, and slow down if the rain and spray from vehicles makes it difficult to see and be seen.

## **In fog**

Drivers should switch on their fog lights and not use lights on full beam as the fog will reflect the light back. If you really cannot see, you should consider finding a safe place to stop until it is safe to continue.

Drivers are advised to follow messages on the overhead signs and listen to radio updates.

Further information on [travelling in winter](#).

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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# **[Environment Secretary sets out animal health and welfare support for livestock farmers](#)**

Farmers will be encouraged to keep healthier, higher welfare animals as part of the Government's flagship farming reforms, including fully-funded annual vet visits and grants to improve conditions for livestock.

During his speech at the National Farmers Union conference, the Environment Secretary George Eustice outlined his vision for internationally competitive livestock sectors. He set out plans for the [Animal Health and Welfare Pathway](#) – a programme of financial support for farmers in the pig, cattle, sheep and poultry sectors, based around key animal health and welfare priorities.

These include measures such as reducing mastitis and lameness in dairy cattle, improving biosecurity to control pig diseases endemic to the UK and improving the feather cover of laying hens. To help farming sectors make these improvements, Animal Health and Welfare Grants will be launched within the next year to fund investments such as equipment and technology or larger projects like upgrading housing for dairy cattle to deliver improvements in lameness, cow comfort and calf mortality.

As part of the [Pathway](#), the Government will initially offer cattle, sheep and pig farmers who are eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme funding for an annual visit from a vet of their choice to carry out diagnostic testing, review biosecurity and responsible use of medicines, and provide advice relating to the health and welfare of their animals. These visits will launch later this year (2022) and the offer will be further extended over time to other types of livestock farmers.

The [Animal Health and Welfare Pathway](#) will also include a disease eradication and control programme. This will allow farmers to apply for financial support to enable them to take measures to prevent and reduce endemic diseases affecting livestock such as veterinary advice, vaccination, or improvements to on-farm management.

We plan to trial a payment by results programme. This would mean rewarding farmers who can demonstrate high animal health and welfare outcomes, such as those such as those who provide their animals ample space and enrichment so they can better express their natural behaviours.

**Environment Secretary, George Eustice said:**

The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway is for those farmers who are in pursuit of higher profitability through better health outcomes, and it starts with an annual vet visit.

Farmers will be able to have a vet of their choice, the family vet that they trust, and the government will pay. That vet will be able to help the farmer put together a plan for improved animal health and improved profitability on their livestock holding.

**Chief Vet, Christine Middlemiss said:**

I hope to see wide-scale adoption of the Annual Health and Welfare Review as part of normal business practice, more farmers taking action to improve health and welfare, and improved outcomes when it comes to endemic diseases and conditions – which will improve animal health welfare and reduce waste, antibiotic use and financial losses.

Outside the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, the Government is designing a new, fairer farming system that works in the best interests of farmers. The

Pathway is a critical part of the farming reforms set out in the [Agricultural Transition Plan](#) to promote the production of healthier, higher-welfare animals.

Farmers in England already achieve some of the highest welfare standards in the world and the new measures will support industry as they adapt to global health challenges like antimicrobial resistance, zoonotic disease outbreaks, the race to Net Zero, and biodiversity loss. The reforms will deliver benefits for animal health and welfare, farm productivity, food security, public health, UK trade and the environment.

Further information on how livestock farmers can apply for the first step of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway, the Annual Health and Welfare Review, will be shared in the Spring. Farmers will have the opportunity to influence the items that are included within the Animal Health and Welfare grants equipment and technology list. Further information on how to take part will be disseminated through representative industry organisations.

## **Further information**

The Pathway is about more than just financial assistance and consists of three mutually reinforcing strands which will:

- support livestock farmers financially by using public funds to pay for health and welfare enhancements that are valued by the public and not currently delivered sufficiently by the market or through existing regulatory standards.
- stimulate market demand for higher welfare products by making it easier for consumers to purchase food that aligns with their values, improving transparency, and providing the industry with a level playing field to promote such products. We are looking at potential market interventions – such as labelling (recent call for evidence) and mandatory public disclosure – that could improve the accessibility, availability, and affordability of higher welfare products for consumers, while driving positive procurement choices by retailers.
- strengthen the regulatory baseline over time, making sure we maintain our current high standards and continue to raise them where necessary, with details subject to consultation with all relevant sectors.

## **The Vet Visit**

This will pay for 2-3 hours of farmer and vet time to: look at the health and welfare of their animals, including biosecurity and responsible use of medicines; receive a report from the vet, which will include some achievable actions the farmer can take to improve health and welfare – this will not be shared with the Government, and is between the farmer and vet; advice on action to take resulting from testing; and signposting to other support, including future grants and disease control schemes.

Each Review will be bespoke. The farmer and vet will decide how to prioritise their time. It will also involve testing:

- Cattle: BVD
- Sheep: Drench Test
- Pigs: PRRS

It will be a cash payment and farmers will be responsible for agreeing a rate with their vet – we do not expect to see their invoice from the vet or similar. The payments rates will be:

- pigs – £684
- sheep – £436
- beef cattle – £522
- dairy cattle – £372

Payment rates are fixed and have been refined in collaboration with industry, based upon priority testing required. Payments will go to the farmer, covering their commitment, vet time and diagnostic testing. Variation in payment rates between species is due to differences in priority disease testing costs.