

Swarming drones concept flies closer to reality

Press release

A swarm of 20 drones, composed of 5 different types, with different operational capabilities has recently completed the largest collaborative, military focused evaluation of swarming Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) in the UK.



Drone graphic

The exercise was the culmination of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl)'s 'Many Drones Make Light Work' competition, funded under the MOD's Science and Technology Portfolio through the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA). Following 2 earlier phases, the £2.5 million contract for Phase 3 was awarded in January 2019. This was for an Integrated Concept Evaluation activity to explore the technical feasibility and military utility of a swarm of up to 20 small UAVs operating collaboratively. This was awarded to an industry team led by Blue Bear Systems Research including Plextek DTS, IQHQ, Airbus and Durham University.

The swarm consisted of 5 different types and sizes of fixed wing drones together with 6 different payload types, flying representative tasks at RAF Spadeadam in Cumbria. Three operators in Blue Bear's Mobile Command & Control System (MCCS) managed the entire swarm whilst simultaneously handling different, collaborative payload analysis tasks.

[Many Drones Make Light Work](#)

The UAVs flew simultaneous Beyond Visual Line Of Sight (BVLOS) cooperative tasks, with Blue Bear collaborative autonomy ensuring they all contributed to overall mission goals. Throughout the 2 weeks of trials, more than 220 sorties were undertaken.

The Dstl Project Technical Authority, said:

Dstl has been driving research in autonomous systems across different platforms and domains for many years. This is a significant step forward in our understanding of the capabilities of swarming drones and has been achieved through excellent collaboration across the MOD and with a number of Small and Medium Enterprise partners. This 18 month collaboration has resulted in the demonstration of an operationally relevant capability and will inform and de-risk future choices and decisions about swarming drone capability.

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[Interim CEO appointed for Office for Environmental Protection](#)

Natalie Prosser has been appointed by Defra as the Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Designate of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP).

She was confirmed in this post in agreement with the Chair-designate of the OEP, Dame Glenys Stacey, and the appointment was approved by the Civil Service Commission.

Natalie is currently General Counsel at the Gambling Commission. Her previous roles have included Director of Legal at Ofqual and regulatory and policy lead on the independent Farm Inspection and Regulation Review.

She will start her role in February alongside Dame Glenys. The role of the Interim CEO is time limited until December and will be focussed on setting up the new body pending the appointment of a permanent CEO.

Speaking about her appointment, Natalie said:

The OEP has such an important job to do, with the clear ambition to set the benchmark for excellence in environmental regulation.

We must take on that challenge in a focused and dedicated way and we must establish ourselves so that we can make the wise and well informed decisions that will enable us to make best use of our powers and our voice in order to protect and improve our environment. I am so delighted to be able to play my part in establishing the OEP as the world leading environmental regulator that it needs to be.

Dame Glenys Stacey, Chair-designate of the OEP, said:

I am delighted that Natalie will be our interim CEO. She brings an in-depth understanding of public law, regulation and enforcement, and her experience in shaping and developing organisations independent of government and with oversight functions will be invaluable.

I am looking forward to working closely with Natalie to set up the OEP, a new and independent environmental watchdog. We have a one-off opportunity to build a truly capable and committed organisation.

The OEP will be created by the Environment Bill and will be a new, independent statutory body with the principal objective of contributing to environmental protection and the improvement of the natural environment. It was announced this week that the Environment Bill is being carried over to the next parliamentary session, with Report Stage recommencing early in the Second Session, with Royal Assent expected in the Autumn.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow also announced this week that the OEP will have its headquarters in Worcester – part of the Government's commitment to ensuring that opportunities are spread fairly across the country.

The appointment of the interim CEO and confirmation of the OEP's location demonstrates the Government's commitment to a green recovery and maintaining environmental standards now we have left the European Union.

[Gradings under review for Salvation Army Housing Association](#)

Press release

The GUR lists registered providers whose compliance with RSH's economic standards is being investigated.



The Regulator of Social Housing reports that Salvation Army Housing Association has been placed on its gradings under review list today (28 January 2021).

Salvation Army Housing Association's current grades are G2/V2. The regulator notifies that a provider's grading is under review when its compliant grade (G1 and G2 for governance, V1 or V2 for viability) is being investigated in relation to an issue which may result in a downgrade to a non-compliant grade (G3 or G4 for governance, V3 or V4 for viability).

The regulator is currently investigating matters which may impact on Salvation Army Housing Association's compliance with the Governance and Financial Viability Standard. The outcome of the investigation will be confirmed in a regulatory judgement, once completed.

The regulator's [gradings under review list](#) and [Salvation Army Housing Association's regulatory judgements page](#) are available on the website.

Notes to editors

1. The GUR lists providers where we are investigating a matter that might result in them being assessed as non-compliant in relation to the regulator's Governance and Financial Viability Standard.
2. The [regulatory standards](#) can be found on the RSH website.
3. The Regulator of Social Housing promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants.
4. For press office contact details, see the [Media enquiries page](#). For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

Jenrick announces free admission to the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial

- Government to provide free entry for all visitors to the proposed new national Memorial and Learning Centre, in perpetuity.
- Commitment ensures everyone can pay their respects, contemplate and honour, the six million Jewish men, women and children who were murdered in the Holocaust and all other victims of Nazi persecution.
- Announcement puts the new national memorial on a similar footing to the most important monuments and museums in UK.

The government will provide free entry, in perpetuity, to everyone visiting the proposed new Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick announced today (28 January 2021).

Giving universal free access to the memorial puts the UK on the same footing as the most important monuments and museums and will reassure Holocaust survivors their testimony will be freely available to all when they are no longer able to tell the story themselves, forever.

The Memorial, which is planned to be built next to Parliament in Victoria Tower Gardens, will be the focal point for national remembrance of the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered in the Holocaust and all other victims of Nazi persecution.

The learning centre will be a world-class facility, giving visitors powerful and engaging experiences to learn about the Holocaust and subsequent genocides through a variety of mediums including historic photographs, film footage and audio recordings.

Government support will supplement funds raised from visitor donations and other charitable contributions to cover the running costs of the Memorial and Learning Centre which, subject to planning permission, is expected to open in 2024. The government has already announced that it will contribute up to £75 million towards construction costs, to be supplemented by £25 million from charitable donations.

The Communities Secretary also announced a further £25,000 funding to support the work the Wiener Library does in using its archive to bring closure to families who lost loved ones during the Holocaust.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Free entry, in perpetuity, to the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre will mean that there are no barriers to people commemorating and learning about the evils of the Holocaust and is keeping with our national tradition of free entry to monuments and museums of great national significance.

As first-hand testimony from survivors becomes rarer and rarer, it is incumbent on all of us to be their witnesses. The Memorial will serve as a continual reminder to us all of why we need to make a stand against antisemitism, racism and hatred, whenever and wherever we find it – something that this government will always do.

Ed Balls and Lord Eric Pickles, Co-Chairs of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, said:

This is the clearest demonstration of the Government's commitment to addressing Holocaust Remembrance. Free access will widen the visitor base and enable the centre to extend its message and work to a greater range of people. The centre will work closely with other institutions, both national and international, to tackle Holocaust denial and Antisemitism.

Marie van der Zyl, Board of Deputies of British Jews President, said:

We welcome the news that entry to the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre will be free to all visitors. We thank the government and the Secretary of State for this important announcement.

UK and international visitors will now have the opportunity to discover the truth about the Shoah, genocide and the dangerous places to which racism leads.

We hope this will increase understanding; help stop the lies and falsehoods surrounding this terrible period; and enable us all to confront prejudice wherever it is found.

Karen Pollock CBE, Chief Executive, Holocaust Educational Trust, said:

The Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre will do immeasurable good for Holocaust education and remembrance in this country and I am delighted that it has been confirmed that this important resource will be accessible to all. We must ensure that the horrors of the Holocaust are never forgotten, and that its lessons are learnt for generations to come.

Sir Ben Helfgott MBE, Holocaust survivor, said:

The Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre will ensure that the memory of those who perished in the Holocaust are never forgotten and that the testimonies of those who survived are protected and remembered. These are fundamental to conveying the lessons of tolerance and understanding.

Civil news: changes to mortgage debt in eligibility calculations



An important change to the eligibility criteria is happening with the removal of the mortgage cap as part of the means test for civil legal aid.

Recent legislation has removed the existing cap on the amount of mortgage debt that can be deducted from a property's value, so that all mortgage debt will be deducted.

This means that more individuals will pass the financial eligibility criteria for civil legal aid.

We are in the process of implementing the necessary changes made to the regulations to make sure that claimants with a mortgage over a specific value are not disadvantaged in applying for legal aid.

Legal Aid Agency (LAA) Chief Executive, Jane Harbottle said:

The LAA is working to implement these important changes as quickly as possible and I would like to acknowledge this work to support families experiencing difficult circumstances.

This change, together with specific compensation schemes being excluded from our calculations for legal aid will help to widen access to justice in civil

cases of law.

Forms update

The changes to eligibility regulations have been reflected in the civil legal aid application forms.

Previous versions of the application forms will continue to be accepted until 31 March 2021.

However, the previous forms will still refer to the mortgage cap and providers must ensure that the correct regulations are applied in the calculation of an individual's means and therefore the full mortgage/secured loan must be deducted.

Please make use of the new forms as soon as possible.

Further information

[Civil news: amendments to legal aid eligibility criteria](#)

[Civil legal aid: means testing](#)

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1. 28 January 2021

Edit to remove the section on CCMS contingency arrangements now that the change has been made to operational software.

2. 28 January 2021

First published.