

News story: UK team to lead European mission to study new planets

The ARIEL (Atmospheric Remote-sensing Infrared Exoplanet Large-survey) mission was selected today as the next European Space Agency (ESA) science mission, putting UK leadership at the heart of research into planets that lie outside our solar system – exoplanets.

Thousands of exoplanets have now been discovered with a huge diversity of masses, sizes and orbits, but very little is known about their chemical composition, formation, or their evolutionary links to their host stars.

ARIEL will carry out the first ever large-scale survey of exoplanets specifically to examine their atmospheres. It will study hot, Jupiter-size planets close to their stars, and so will help scientists understand the key processes which form planetary systems and affect how they evolve.

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

“Space is our final frontier and, working with UCL, we want to be at the forefront of discovering new planets. British involvement in this incredibly exciting new mission demonstrates how integral our world-leading scientific expertise is in solving some of space’s greatest mysteries.

“The UK is a go-to destination for research and discovery, being home to some of the brightest and best talent. Through our modern Industrial Strategy and record funding for R&D, increasing investment to around £12 billion by 2021, we will continue to do all we can to boost our world-leading science sector and build a Britain fit for the future.”

ESA’s Science Programme Committee chose ARIEL for the fourth medium class science mission (M4) in its Cosmic Vision Programme. Subject to further review, the UK Space Agency will provide a multi-million pound investment package to support UK leadership of the project.

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

“It is thanks to the world-leading skills of our innovative space community that a UK-led consortium has been chosen to take forward the next ESA science mission. This demonstrates what a vital role we continue to play in European collaboration on research in space.

“The ARIEL mission is a prime example of the scientific innovation underpinning the wider economy. It relies on the UK’s science and engineering expertise, which are at the forefront of the Government’s Industrial Strategy.”

The mission’s Principal Investigator is Professor Giovanna Tinetti, from University College London, who will lead the mission science. STFC RAL Space will manage the overall European consortium building the payload, which will

be assembled and tested in Harwell, Oxfordshire. Other UK involvement will come from Cardiff University, Oxford University and the UK Astronomy Technology Centre. UK industry can also expect to be involved in the satellite's construction and operations.

Prof Giovanna Tinetti of UCL said:

"Although we've now discovered around 3800 planets orbiting other stars, the nature of these exoplanets remains largely mysterious. ARIEL will study a statistically large sample of exoplanets to give us a truly representative picture of what these planets are like. This will enable us to answer questions about how the chemistry of a planet links to the environment in which it forms, and how its birth and evolution are affected by its parent star."

The ARIEL Consortium Project Manager, Paul Eccleston, of STFC RAL Space, said:

"It is wonderful news that ESA have selected ARIEL for the next medium class science mission. The team are very excited to have the opportunity to realise the mission we've been developing for the last two years. ARIEL will revolutionise our understanding of how planetary systems form and evolve, helping us put our own solar system into context and compare it to our neighbours in the galaxy."

The UK's central roles in ARIEL build on our international leadership in astronomy and planetary science, and will complement the science being delivered by the European Space Agency's Gaia and PLATO missions, and by the NASA-led James Webb Space Telescope, all missions with major UK involvement.

Press release: PM call with Prime Minister Abe: 20 March 2018

This morning the Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Abe of Japan.

The Prime Minister updated Prime Minister Abe on the investigation into the attack on Sergei Skripal and his daughter and the reckless endangerment of the British public through the use of a military grade nerve agent developed by Russia.

The Prime Minister noted that the incident was a grave violation of international law and also state sovereignty.

Prime Minister Abe condemned the incident, and said Japan shared our strong conviction that the use of chemical weapons should never be tolerated. He expressed heartfelt sympathy for the victims, and said Japan shared our

outrage.

They agreed that those responsible must be brought to justice and that Russia must respond in a serious manner, including by cooperating fully with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) investigation.

Speech: Speech at the Queen's Birthday Party 2018 in Guatemala

(Check against delivery)

Welcome and thanks for joining us today at our very special party. This is the third time I have had the honour to be one of the hosts of the Queen's Birthday Party here in Guatemala – but the first time I have had a speaking part! For those who do not know –or didn't read their invitation very carefully – and are wondering why Tom is being uncharacteristically silent, Tom and I swapped roles in November last year when I was appointed ambassador to Guatemala and he to Honduras. It is a great privilege for me to be British ambassador in a country I had already got to know and love during our first two years here. I feel very honoured.

Apart from the name and gender of the British Ambassador, nothing else has changed. My objectives, values and ambitions for UK-Guatemala relations are exactly the same as Tom's and reflect very clearly the policies of the British Government.

We still have the European Union flag here by the stage because we are still active and committed members of the European Union. And I want to thank all our partners and allies in Europe and in other countries for their strong support one week after the Salisbury attack.

This year our Queen's Birthday Party falls in the middle of our Fifteen Days of the UK, a festival of British activity across a whole range of areas, demonstrating very clearly the wide range of UK-Guatemalan engagement: on Monday the British ship RFA Mounts Bay visited Puerto Barrios and shared experience with Guatemalan counterparts of its role providing humanitarian assistance in the Caribbean after the dreadful destruction of last year's hurricanes; earlier this week we had various workshops with two experts from HM Treasury to talk about British experience and expertise in infrastructure development and public private partnerships; next week three judges from the UK will be here to discuss the importance of judicial independence and provide training to judges on how to manage complex cases. As part of an ongoing project we have with the British Museum and Google Arts and Culture, that connects Mayan ruins discovered in the 19th Century with the latest technology, we have a special kit in Guatemala to virtually demonstrate these wonders and I invite you to pass by our stand and check them out. On Saturday

we will be formally marking the end of a project we have supported for the last two years working with girls' clubs in Guatemala City and Mixco to encourage girls to stay in education and be ambitious for themselves and their future.

Girls' education – and the need for every girl, as well as boy, to have 12 years of quality education – is a key priority of the British Government. We recognise that if you change the lives of girls, you transform societies. A British NGO working here, supporting education, Phoenix Projects, has seen a real reduction in the numbers enrolling for its primary school because more girls are now staying on at secondary school and then going on to get jobs after that, destroying the vicious circle of young pregnancies. Girls' education and greater political participation are key not only to development, but also to peace and security.

As for political participation, you may have noticed that some of the ladies here are dressed as if they were going to an event 100 years ago, and there is a very good reason for that. This year the UK is celebrating the centenary of (some) women obtaining the right to vote and acknowledging the important role played by the suffragette campaigners in changing the law. I have to admit to a particular affinity to the suffragettes: they were headed by a formidable lady from Manchester, Emmeline Pankhurst, and her daughters went to the same school as I did (although not, despite what my children think, at the same time!). The Pankhursts were great believers in the power of education.

Some of the statements made against them at the time of their campaign appear to us now quite absurd, for example: If women become involved in politics, they will stop marrying, stop having children, and the human race will die out. As the ambassador of a country with a female head of state and a female prime minister, I am delighted that such views no longer prevail, that times have changed.

Often people talk about the importance of traditional values, without being very clear what is meant. Some traditional values – a woman's place is in the home – are not ones I or my country espouse. So let's be clear about the values we do espouse, the UK promotes the universal human values of integrity, respect for human rights, good government, gender equality and rule of law. And we are proud to work with Guatemala in these areas.

We are also proud to have worked with Guatemala in its fight against corruption, a fight which has assured Guatemala a global reputation for better governance and for tackling problems which blight many countries. Our support for the Public Prosecutor's Office and CICIG is assured and we trust that the election of the next Public Prosecutor, as well as the other important positions such as Head of the Tax Office, and Comptroller General, will enable Guatemala to continue on the same path of fighting and preventing corruption. Corruption and a weak rule of law frighten away investors and as British ambassador I am keen to see many more British companies in Guatemala. This is why I am very pleased that our British Chamber of Commerce is already registered and will start operations in two months and will be a great vehicle to support more British Companies investing in Guatemala.

We already have several British companies and brands here in Guatemala and I wish to thank them and others for their generous sponsorship of our event today, especially, Jaguar Energy, Transequipos, Cementos Progresos, CSC Group, Yantarni, Cerveceria Centroamericana and Twinings. I also want to thank the British Embassy staff who have worked hard to make this party a great success.

I am also delighted to see many members of our Chevening Alumni Association here today – Guatemalans who have received full scholarships from the British Government to study a Masters degree at some of the best universities in the world. Britain has worked hard to achieve its reputation for excellence in academia and research, but we have also been fortunate to have many distinguished British scientists. Yesterday we said goodbye to one of the greatest modern scientists Sir Stephen Hawking, a physicist who was not constrained by his physical condition, who looked to the stars and inspired us all to do the same. If ever there were a man who showed what a human being is capable of, it was Stephen Hawking. He will be much missed.

I have spoken a lot already about women's suffrage, but we are actually here today to mark the birthday of the one woman in the UK who does not have the vote – Her Majesty the Queen. This year the Queen will be 92 years old and last month marked the 66th anniversary of her accession to the throne. Despite her advancing years she will be hosting next month in London a summit of 52 heads of Government from the Commonwealth. She remains very active and much admired around the world. Her birthday is very definitely a cause for celebration, and I would like to ask you all to join me in a toast to Her Majesty the Queen.

News story: MOT rule changes: 20 May 2018

The way that the MOT test works in England, Scotland and Wales will change from Sunday 20 May 2018.

The changes will affect cars, vans, motorcycles and other light passenger vehicles.

There are 5 main changes you need to know.

1. Defects will be categorised differently

Defects found during the MOT will be categorised as either:

The category the MOT tester gives each item will depend on the type of problem and how serious it is.

MOT testers will still give advice about items you need to monitor. These are known as 'advisories'.

What the new categories mean

Item result	What it means about the item	How it affects your MOT result
Dangerous	A direct and immediate risk to road safety or has a serious impact on the environment. Do not drive the vehicle until it's been repaired.	Fail
Major	It may affect the vehicle's safety, put other road users at risk or have an impact on the environment. Repair it immediately.	Fail
Minor	No significant effect on the safety of the vehicle or impact on the environment. Repair as soon as possible.	Pass
Advisory	It could become more serious in the future. Monitor and repair it if necessary.	Pass
Pass	It meets the minimum legal standard. Make sure it continues to meet the standard.	Pass

2. Stricter rules for diesel car emissions

There will be stricter limits for emissions from diesel cars with a diesel particulate filter (DPF).

A DPF captures and stores exhaust soot to reduce emissions from diesel cars.

Check your car's handbook if you don't know if your car has a DPF.

Your vehicle will get a major fault if the MOT tester:

- can see smoke of any colour coming from the exhaust
- finds evidence that the DPF has been tampered with

3. Some new things will be included in the MOT

Daytime running lights will be checked on vehicles first used from 1 March 2018.

Some new items will be tested during the MOT.

They include checking:

- if tyres are obviously underinflated
- if the brake fluid has been contaminated
- for fluid leaks posing an environmental risk
- brake pad warning lights and if brake pads or discs are missing
- reversing lights on vehicles first used from 1 September 2009

- headlight washers on vehicles first used from 1 September 2009 (if they have them)
- daytime running lights on vehicles first used from 1 March 2018 (most of these vehicles will have their first MOT in 2021 when they're 3 years old)

There will be other smaller changes to how some items are checked. Your MOT centre will be able to tell you about these.

4. The MOT certificate will change

The current MOT test certificate (left) will change to a new style (right) to list the new types of defects.

The design of the [MOT certificate](#) will change.

It will list any defects under the new categories, so they're clear and easy to understand.

The service to [check the MOT history of a vehicle](#) will be updated to reflect the changes.

5. Some vehicles over 40 years old won't need an MOT

Cars, vans, motorcycles and other light passenger vehicles won't need to have an MOT if they're over 40 years old and have not been [substantially changed \(PDF, 62.8KB\)](#).

At the moment, only vehicles first built before 1960 are exempt from needing an MOT.

When the rules change on 20 May 2018, vehicles won't need an MOT from the 40th anniversary of when they were registered. You can [check the date the vehicle was registered](#) online.

Example

If a car was first registered on 31 May 1978, it won't need an MOT from 31 May 2018.

You won't have to apply to stop getting an MOT for your vehicle.

However, each time you [tax your historic vehicle](#) (even if you don't pay a fee), you'll have to declare it meets the rules for not needing an MOT.

More information

The [maximum fees](#) MOT centres can charge won't change.

In January 2018, the government decided to [keep the age a vehicle needs its first MOT at 3 years](#), rather than extend it to 4 years.

You can [get a free MOT reminder](#) by text message or email a month before your MOT is due.

You can be fined up to £1,000 for driving a vehicle without a valid MOT.

Speech: Call for Humanitarian Aid and Government Accountability in DRC

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you to our briefers for their clear and detailed accounts of why there has been such a rapid increase in humanitarian need in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As Undersecretary General Lowcock reported, the number of people needing aid in the DRC has doubled in the past year. Today 13.1 million people need humanitarian assistance, the same number as in Syria. The United Nations has declared the worst level of humanitarian crisis – “Level 3” – in certain provinces, putting DRC alongside only Yemen, Syria and Iraq. Yet it is often absent from our screens and daily briefings. We must not let it fall down our agenda.

Mr President,

We are particularly concerned about the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable, especially women and girls, the disabled and children. The United Nation’s Joint Human Rights Office reported that there has been a 53% increase in victims of sexual violence in 2017.

Now, the Representative of EFIM gave us a powerful testimony and I’m grateful to her.

Hope, is a woman from Masisi in the east of the country, where 90% of the women have been raped. Four men in military uniforms raped her as she collected firewood for her family. The attack left her pregnant and HIV positive. She has since fled to a temporary camp in Goma and can no longer feed her eight children. They rely on humanitarian aid, like 8 million other Congolese children. 2 million children currently face starvation. Hope is one of 4.5 million internally displaced people in the DRC – the highest number in Africa. Over 2 million people have been displaced in the past year alone, so just in the last year, an equivalent number to the total number of IDPs in South Sudan has been displaced in DRC. There are a further 740,000 refugees

from the DRC in neighbouring countries as a result of ongoing hostilities.

Mr President,

International support is vital to address the crisis and the United Kingdom will continue to play a key role. We have committed to spending \$285 million on humanitarian aid between 2017 and 2022. This support will provide over 3 million people with lifesaving support, including food, clean drinking water and essential health care.

To improve the challenging and limited access for humanitarian actors, DRC Government support is crucial. While we welcome the commitments made to facilitate the work of humanitarian organisations and reduce tariffs for humanitarian imports including medicines and food, this Council, and the people of the DRC, need to see concrete and sustained action.

In particular, we urge the Government to take the following three steps:

First, improve the administrative and financial registration procedures required for international NGOs to operate lawfully in-country, through consultations with NGOs themselves.

Second, reduce the bureaucracy for humanitarian workers to get visas and for essential relief items to get through customs.

And finally, ensure security across the country is maintained so that humanitarian organisations have sufficient access to those most in need.

The upcoming donor conference on 13th April is an opportunity for the Government of the Congo to demonstrate the progress they have made against their commitments to facilitate the improvement of the humanitarian situation.

It is also an opportunity for the international community to pledge our support to the people of the DRC and to show them that the World remembers Africa's "forgotten" crisis.

Mr President,

Let me be clear, humanitarian aid will only ever provide temporary relief in this crisis. The key root cause is political instability, which drives the deteriorating security and humanitarian situations. Too often, peaceful protesters are met with violence for speaking out about their political rights, in violation of their human rights. A number of people have been killed in church-led protests this year which we all must condemn.

Free, fair and transparent elections must be held on 23 December. With an estimated 46 million voters, spread over the world's eleventh largest country, this is no easy task. For the elections to be successful, the right conditions need to be created now.

The international community must remain focussed and united in our support for the people of DRC, and we must remain united in our expectations of its

government, and our insistence on accountability and progress. We in the Security Council need to work with the region and sub-region to do so.

Mr President,

Finally, it is with great sadness that we remember the horrific, tragic murders of the UN experts Zaida Catalan and Michael Sharp, killed just over one year ago in the Kasai region of DRC. This Council must continue to push for accountability for their deaths and we call on the Democratic Republic of Congo to ensure that their investigation is thorough and transparent and to ensure that all those responsible are held to account. We should have a full update on the progress of that investigation soon.

Thank you Mr President.