

BRIT NAV SAT?
**UK Space Agency leads work on options
for an independent satellite system**

According to a recent statement the UK Space Agency will lead work to develop options for a British Global Navigation Satellite System. This was confirmed by the Government on 2 May as it develops options for a British Global Navigation Satellite System.

Led by the UK Space Agency, a taskforce of Government specialists and industry will work quickly to develop options that will provide both civilian and encrypted signals and be compatible with the GPS system.

It is reported that the UK is already a world-leader in developing satellite technology, building 40% of the world's small satellites and one in four commercial telecommunications satellites.

Down the years UK companies have made a critical contribution to the EU Galileo programme, building the payloads for the satellites and developing security systems. This taskforce will draw on this experience and expertise as it develops plans for an innovative system that could deliver on the UK's security needs and provide commercial services.

Business Secretary Greg Clark commented: *'This taskforce will develop options for an independent satellite navigation system using the world-beating expertise of Britain's thriving space sector. We have made our position clear to the European Commission and highlighted the importance of the UK to the Galileo programme.'*

'It is now right that we explore alternative options to ensure our security needs are met as we continue to take full advantage of the opportunities that exist in the global space sector, through our modern Industrial Strategy.'

Dr Graham Turnock, CEO of UK Space Agency added: *'As the Government has made clear, we should begin work now on options for a national alternative to Galileo to guarantee our satellite positioning, navigation and timing needs are met in the future. The UK Space Agency is well placed to lead this work and will use a wide-range of expertise from across the space, engineering and security sectors.'*

It is understood that the UK will be able to use Galileo's open signal in the future, and British Armed Forces and emergency services were due to have access to the encrypted system when it is fully operational.

The Government has been clear there is a mutual benefit to the UK remaining involved in Galileo and is working hard to deliver this. Without the assurance that UK industry can collaborate on an equal basis and without continued access to the necessary security-related information, the UK could be obliged to end its participation in the project.

The Business Secretary Greg Clark wrote to the European Commission in April 2018 expressing concern about its intention to exclude the UK from the secure elements of Galileo. The UK Space Agency has been engaging regularly with the UK companies involved and will now lead the work to develop potential alternative options.

The recent Blakett review* estimated that a failure of navigation satellite service could cost the UK economy £1 billion a day. Resilient and secure positioning, navigation and timing information is increasingly essential for defence, critical national infrastructure and emergency response.

The UK Space Agency is driving the growth of the space sector as part of the Government's Industrial Strategy with major initiatives including the National Space Test Facility at Harwell, and the UK continues to be a leading member of the European Space Agency, which is independent of the EU.

New figures released on 2 May by the ADS Group trade body** show that in 2017 the UK space industry was worth around £15 billion a year in turnover, with exports of £5.4 billion and 71% growth since 2012.

* *Satellite-derived Time and Position: a Study of Critical Dependencies* exploring our dependency on global navigation satellite systems (GNSS). See: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/676675/satellite-derived-time-and-position-blakett-review.pdf

** **Representing aerospace, defence, security & space sectors, see:** <https://www.adsgroup.org.uk>)

Picture caption

London pictured from the International Space Station.

Photo: ESA/Tim Peake ©