



Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 1
Victoria Street,
London

25 September 2020

Dear Alok,

I have been made aware of reports that the UK Space Agency is set to scrap plans to build a Sovereign Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS).

As you know, on the 17 September 2020 my committee held an evidence session to understand the capabilities of the OneWeb satellite network and how this relates, or not, with the government's previous commitment to invest in a sovereign satellite system post-Brexit.

You have described the decision to invest in OneWeb as putting the UK at the heart of the latest advances in space technology. My committee is keen to understand how the investment will meet UK defence and critical national infrastructure needs.

In oral evidence to my committee on 17 September 2020 we invited witnesses to comment on the prospect of a UK Sovereign GNSS.

We heard that "it is unambiguously necessary to have reliable and predictable GNSS navigation services, whether the correct answer is a dedicated independent national system, a regional system or an augmentation system". It was noted that if the UK does not have its own system, we may risk falling technologically behind everyone else. Further, that for critical national infrastructure such as financial transactions, control of the power grid and certain military applications, reliance issues come into play that we must solve.

In your letter on 17 September 2020 you reaffirmed your Department's willingness to engage in our inquiry into the Government's acquisition of OneWeb. With that in mind, I would be grateful if you could confirm whether the UK Space Agency is set to scrap plans to build a Sovereign Global Navigation Satellite System, whether this was considered during the OneWeb acquisition and what steps your Department are taking to reduce UK reliance on both the United States GPS system and the European Union's Galileo system?

Darren Jones MP
Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee