



**Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy**

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Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Chair of the Science and Technology Committee
House of Commons
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NOVEMBER 2022

Dear Greg

I am writing to inform you of the announcement today that the Government is launching a package of up to £200m funding to invest in the UK Earth Observation sector to protect the future of UK talent and industry in earth observation and mitigate the impact of ongoing delays to UK participation in the EU Copernicus programme, while the EU continues to block our association.

Earth observation (EO) is a vital science and a growing industry. This is the right time to time to invest in projects which benefit our planet and grow our economy – EO supports the UK to become a science superpower and prioritises our space and Net Zero ambitions – more than half of key climate data comes from space.

The UK has a vibrant landscape of world leading EO academic and industrial organisations and a well-founded reputation for excellence in EO. For example, in climate science, leading UK research institutions have been measuring Sea and Land Surface Temperature from space for over three decades (RAL Space, Leicester University, Reading University and Oxford University) brought together through NERC's National Centre for Earth Observation. This data is used by meteorological agencies, including the Met Office, around the world to improve weather forecast accuracy – helping to save lives, infrastructure and crops.

In the National Space Strategy, HMG committed to remain at the forefront of earth observation technology and knowhow. The investments announced today will deliver an essential funding boost to recognise the importance of this work/market and will benefit academia and industry and build our national capability. The funding is spread across 17 projects delivered through the following government partner organisations:

- £122.6m European Space Agency (ESA, through UKSA)
- £15m UK Space Agency (UKSA)
- £19.3m Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
- £14.7m Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)
- £11.7m Met Office
- £4.2m Innovate UK

These projects will deliver benefits across the UK and include a broad range of activities from measuring wind speeds to improving the accuracy of climate data, and from funding SME projects to additional PhD places. Some projects will involve new or extended collaborations with international partners such as Australia.

Investing in the UK EO sector is a vital part of achieving our ambitions in space and with the range of applications of EO data including Net Zero targets, but it is just the first step.

Over the last few months, my officials have begun discussions with the earth observation community about the longer term plans for the sector. The package announced today provides an interim response to what we have been hearing are their biggest challenges. We will continue to work with the sector to identify strategic priorities to keep building on the world-leading excellence in UK earth observation.

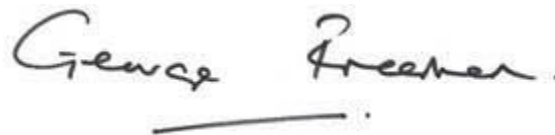
These investments are UK wide and will provide targeted support during this time of uncertainty. They aim to support the retention of talent and firms across the sector, and we have particularly focused on how to ensure both academia and industry can benefit from these projects.

Context

The EU has now delayed our association for nearly two years. The UK has done everything it can to secure association, including entering into formal consultations to encourage the EU to implement their obligations.

The Government remains ready to discuss association with the EU, but with the EU continuing to refuse our request to formalise association, we cannot wait forever. Our priority is to invest in the UK's EO sector, and protect our knowledge and capabilities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "George Freeman." The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Minister George Freeman MP
Minister of State for Science, Research & Innovation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/earth-observation-investment>