



Department for Science, Innovation & Technology

George Freeman MP
Minister of State at the
Department for Science,
Innovation & Technology

Department for Science,
Innovation & Technology

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Chair
Science and Technology Select
Committee
House of Commons
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www.gov.uk

30 May 2023

Dear Greg,

I am writing to you following the Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee oral evidence session on UK space industry and satellite infrastructure that took place on Wednesday 17 May 2023.

Following the session, you have asked for further information about when the Government expects to publish its Position, Navigation and Timing (PNT) strategy and the details of our vision for the Space Council, including who will sit on it, when it should meet, and what its purpose will be.

Position, Navigation and Timing

The Government response to the Committee's report *UK space strategy and UK satellite infrastructure* set out the work that BEIS, and now DSIT, is doing on PNT. I hope that the Government will be in a position to publish the outcome of this work by the autumn, at the very latest. I would like to see this published before then, and I know that I suggested that it might be within weeks when I appeared before the Committee, but, as I also mentioned at the evidence session, the work is a cross-Government effort involving several other Departments and DSIT needs to get agreement from all the parties involved. I hope you will therefore understand my caution about committing to a more ambitious timeframe, when the final decision is not just a matter for me or DSIT.

I would also like to take this opportunity to clarify our exchange on 17 May about the Government work on PNT that you took evidence on during your main inquiry. You said that you took evidence that the PNT strategy had already been developed and consulted within the industry and this was in 2021, or thereabouts. I know you wrote to the then Secretary of State for BEIS about this previous work on 17 March 2022 and the then Secretary of State replied on 25 March. As the 25 March letter set out, the previous, Cabinet Office-led work did not represent an agreed cross-government position on the priorities to be addressed or the risk appetite in any area, nor any agreed mitigation options. The aim of the BEIS and now DSIT work, which was referenced in the Government response to the Committee's report *UK space strategy and UK satellite infrastructure*, was to develop and get agreement to a cross-government position on national PNT resilience through a better understanding of national needs, risks, and mitigations. This has built on the previous Cabinet Office

led work. We hope to publish the outcome of the DSIT project by the autumn at the latest.

Vision for the Space Council

I am pleased to inform you that, following our discussion on 17 May, we have since formally established the National Space Council as an Inter-Ministerial Group, which we expect to meet in the coming months.

The National Space Council will play a vital role in progressing our ambitious space agenda across all of Government. It is tasked with considering issues relating to prosperity, diplomacy and national security in, through and from Space, as part of coordinating overall Government delivery of the 2021 National Space Strategy. The Council will be chaired by the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with Secretaries of State from across Government invited to ensure a single national voice on the UK's space interests. The membership and Terms of Reference for this group will be published on gov.uk in the coming weeks. I look forward to updating you further on our progress in future sessions.

Space Sector Industry Forum

In addition to the establishment of the National Space Council, we will also be shortly launching the Space Sector Industry Forum. The Forum replaces the former Space Leadership Council, to provide a regular and enduring opportunity for industry leaders to meet with Ministers to help inform the Government's long-term strategy for space. The Forum will ensure the sector and representative bodies have ongoing and direct engagement with ministers on current issues facing the sector and priorities for action. We expect to convene the first meeting of the Forum in the summer.

Rest assured I have taken on board your comments and will bear them in mind going forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Freeman." The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a short horizontal line.

GEORGE FREEMAN MP
Minister of State
Department for Science, Innovation & Technology