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11 December 2023

Dear Dame Angela and Lord Browne,

### **Priorities for Strengthening the UK's Sovereign Space Capability**

We are grateful for your letter dated 5 October 2023 setting out the Council for Science and Technology's advice to the Chancellor and DSIT on areas of strategic importance in strengthening the UK's sovereign space capabilities. We are jointly responding on behalf of the government, reflecting the civil and defence nature of the National Space Strategy.

You have rightly identified how critical space is to our daily lives in the UK, and the speed and competitiveness with which it is developing. We use space every day, from navigation and communication to weather forecasting, monitoring our climate, and keeping our troops and the UK safe in a more competitive world. The increasingly vital nature of space, coupled with the large economic potential of this sector, are precisely why in 2021 the Government published our first ever National Space Strategy and outlined the strong ambitions of the UK to build one of the most innovative and attractive space economies in the world.<sup>1</sup>

In the time since the publication of that Strategy, we have taken huge strides. Government has announced more than £10 billion of funding for space activities stretching across a decade, including more than £1.75 billion to our key delivery agency the UK Space Agency (UKSA) in this Spending Review period. We have

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-space-strategy>

appointed a new CEO, Paul Bate, and chair, Lord Willetts, to UKSA; convened the National Space Council to provide ministerial coordination and leadership; and the creation of DSIT has brought together space policy and spectrum and space communications regulatory policy into one department. And we have seen significant successes including both the licensing and first launch from the UK's first spaceport, to securing 3 new astronauts through the European Space Agency (ESA).

Developing our civil space capabilities is central to delivering the ambition of the National Space Strategy. In June we published the National Space Strategy in Action, which included a comprehensive approach to our civil capability goals, including the four priorities you outlined in your letter; Position, Navigation and Timing, Earth Observation, Space Energy and Resources, and Space Domain Awareness.<sup>2</sup> And we have already gone further, announcing in September our agreement to participate in the EU space programme including both Copernicus and the EU's Space Surveillance and Tracking<sup>3</sup>, and in October we set out our new PNT framework.<sup>4</sup>

The National Space Strategy also puts Defence at the heart of government's approach to space. The areas of space capability highlighted by the report are suitable for Defence or dual use, offering more value for money to the public. This will be a guiding principle for the government's future investment decisions on space. Defence has already committed £1.4 billion over the current decade to develop space technologies, on top of the existing £5 billion for upgrading the UK's Skynet satellite communications capability. This investment is adding to cutting edge development in many of the areas cited by the report, including Space Domain Awareness and Earth Observation. Defence is also a strong partner in the government's Policy Framework for Greater PNT Resilience announced in October. We will build on this commitment to science and technology in the coming years as space continues to be at the heart of Defence.

The Council's advice is well timed and positioned, and we will use its evidence to help inform the future development of our interventions to support delivery of the National Space Strategy. Future spending decisions are, of course, a matter for the Government to make through the usual spending review processes and will be set out in due course.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-space-strategy-in-action/national-space-strategy-in-action#pillar-four-developing-resilient-capabilities>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-involvement-in-the-eu-space-programme>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/critical-services-to-be-better-protected-from-satellite-data-disruptions-through-new-position-navigation-and-timing-framework>

Thank you once again for writing, and we look forward to updating the Council as we deliver on the strength of the UK's ambitions across the whole of our science, innovation, and technology goals.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Grant Shapps in black ink.

**RT HON GRANT SHAPPS MP**  
Secretary of State for Defence

Handwritten signature of Michelle Donelan in black ink.

**RT HON MICHELLE DONELAN MP**  
Secretary of State for Science,  
Innovation & Technology