

News story: National Drought Group – Chairman’s Statement: 19 November

The Environment Agency host the National Drought Group (NDG) which brings together stakeholders to coordinate action to maintain protect the environment.

Press release: Spanish investment puts UK rail industry on the fast track

A Spanish manufacturer of passenger trains has announced that more than 1,000 jobs are to be created at a new train manufacturing plant in Scotland.

Press release: Spanish investment puts UK rail industry on the fast track

Talgo will build its first UK manufacturing base at Longannet, near Falkirk, and is also planning to establish an innovation centre in Chesterfield, which will create further high-skilled jobs in the UK engineering sector. The company make intercity, standard, and high-speed trains for use from the USA to Kazakhstan.

Speaking to an audience of more than 100 Spanish and UK investors and stakeholders at a Spain-UK Transport Infrastructure Forum in London, Minister for investment Graham Stuart will outline the £88bn worth of investment that will enter the UK rail infrastructure pipeline, including High Speed 2 and Northern Powerhouse rail.

Minister for Investment, Graham Stuart MP said:

We’re determined to create higher paying jobs for people right across the UK. The only way to do it is by having policies to improve productivity and attract foreign investment (FDI). So I’m delighted that Talgo will create more than a thousand jobs across the UK supply chain thanks to investment in Longannet and Chesterfield.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is transforming this country's effectiveness in attracting FDI with Trade Commissioners in every region of the world, staff in more than 100 countries and a determination to build on our position as the leading foreign investment destination in Europe.

Talgo's UK Director, Jon Veitch, said:

When Talgo started this process, we were looking for just one site. However, we soon realised that all parts of the UK had something to offer.

We have learned about the many rail-related initiatives across the UK, intended to boost capability for research, development, and testing. There is an engineering renaissance under way, and I want Talgo to be a leading partner.

Talgo wants to see a steady supply of engineers and other skilled people enter the workforce, and be the innovators of the future.

The announcement comes after fellow Spanish rail firm CAF were announced earlier this year as the preferred bidder to supply 77 new trains for the Wales and Borders rail franchise. This followed an investment of £30m rolling stock factory in Newport, which will employ 300 people by next year.

The UK is Europe's top destination for foreign direct investment, while recent data released by UNCTAD found that the UK had the second highest level of investment globally in the first six months of this year.

It also has one of the world's top five most innovative economies according to the Global Innovation Index, as well as four of the world's top ten universities.

The UK's advanced manufacturing sector which has over 100,000 companies, while total venture capital investment was more than Germany, Spain, France and Ireland combined last year.

[News story: Armed Forces Minister reaffirms importance of Gibraltar to UK defence](#)

The signing of the Armed Forces (Gibraltar) Act marks an important milestone for both the UK and Gibraltar and will ensure the relationship between

Service Police on The Rock and the Royal Gibraltar Police to go from strength to strength.

Armed Forces Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Gibraltar is of vital importance to the UK Armed Forces and our allies. Whilst our relationship with the EU is changing, our commitment to European prosperity and security remains steadfast and our duty to support Gibraltar, its people and its economy is resolute.

Mark Lancaster also met Chief Minister Fabian Picardo, they discussed the strategic importance of Gibraltar to UK defence. Its value is best demonstrated by the support delivered to HMS Ocean as she docked to load humanitarian aid and disaster relief before sailing to the Caribbean Islands to assist those devastated by Hurricane Irma in 2017 as well as welcoming future flagship, HMS Queen Elizabeth, this year whilst on sea trials.

While onboard HMS Diamond, Mark Lancaster also met Commanding Officer, Commander Ben Keith, and his crew who are returning from training in the eastern Mediterranean. The Portsmouth-based Type 45 warship and her 200 crew have been tested by fighter jets including Tornados, Typhoons and F16s, plus E3 surveillance aircraft and Voyager transporters in the skies above and around Cyprus as well as training in anti-submarine warfare.

The Minister also took the opportunity to catch up with a number of units within British Forces Gibraltar. A visit to the Spyglass and Rockgun Battery's was followed by a visit to the Gibraltar Defence Police Headquarters. He then met with UK Armed Forces service personnel stationed at RAF Gibraltar and got the chance to see the Airfield Fire and Rescue Service's new fire vehicles, which have been procured through joint funding between MOD and HMGoG.

[News story: MOD awards £160m contract to prepare RAF Lakenheath for US F-35s](#)

The Suffolk airbase will be the first permanent international site for US Air Force F-35s in Europe and continues the base's long and proud history of supporting US Air Force capability in the UK.

Co-locating US and UK F-35 capability in the UK will help strengthen the historic military ties between the two nations as well as the partnership between the RAF and US Air Forces

The contract awarded to Kier VolkerFitzpatrick includes the construction of a flight simulator facility, a maintenance unit, new hangars and storage facilities.

The flight simulator will have the capacity to link to other simulators used pilots across the UK and beyond, allowing expertise to be shared and pilots from the UK and US to train together on a regular basis.

At the height of construction, it is expected that there will be up to 700 contractors on site. The investment will also provide wider benefits to the local economy with over 1,000 personnel and family members living at the base.

MOD is also working closely with Forest Heath District Council and Kier VolkerFitzpatrick to ensure that the opportunities to create employment and training are maximised to ensure they last beyond the end of construction.

A ceremony, attended by representatives from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, US Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa (USAFE-AFAFRICA), Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC), Kier VolkerFitzpatrick and Forest Heath District Council, was held at the base to celebrate the award of the contract.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Tobias Ellwood, said:

For more than one hundred years now our armed forces have fought in defence of our common values and interests. Our two countries have developed the deepest, broadest and most advanced relationship of any two nations.

Today marks another step towards reinforcing the strong partnership between our two nations and an exciting milestone for RAF Lakenheath.

This investment will see substantial benefits to local economy, bringing 1,000 new personnel with their families and we will work hard to ensure that the benefits will last long after construction ends.

USAF 48th Fighter Wing Commander, Colonel Will Marshall, said:

This is an exciting milestone for the 48th Fighter Wing and for all our partners. We're transforming RAF Lakenheath together, and the work we do today is critical to the future security of the United States, the United Kingdom and the NATO Alliance.

DIO Commercial Director, Jacqui Rock, said:

We welcome this investment into RAF Lakenheath. This is an incredible opportunity for UK Defence and for the local area and DIO is pleased to be able to support the development of this key infrastructure which will make the beddown of the US F-35s possible.

Managing director of aviation and defence at Kier, James Hindes, said:

We're extremely proud to have been appointed to deliver another prestigious defence project for DIO. It builds on our extensive expertise in the defence sector delivering first-class projects within secure environments including facilities at MoD Lyneham and RAF Shawbury.

We look forward to working closely with the DIO and our local supply chain to provide this crucial infrastructure and deliver this exciting opportunity ready for the arrival of the two permanent squadrons.

Managing director of VolkerFitzpatrick's Civils division, Chris Evans, said:

We are delighted to have been awarded this highly significant project with DIO. VolkerFitzpatrick has been working with the United States Air Force at RAF Lakenheath for over ten years and we look forward to bringing the knowledge we have gained to this new contract.

The project will allow us to build on our substantial experience within the civil airports and defence sector, to deliver the highest quality infrastructure for the new F-35 Fighter Jet.

The contract has been designed so that the enabling work can begin immediately on the award. Building work is programmed to start in the summer next year so that the base can welcome the first of the new aircraft in 2021.

The contract award is the first in a wider programme of work to support US Air Force operations in the UK, with more than US\$1bn expected to be invested in the UK over the next seven to ten years.