

# News story: Defence Minister sees Stockport firm finishing multi-million-pound military bridge order for Australian Army

- Defence Minister Stuart Andrew's visit to WFEL in Stockport signified the completion of the final Dry Support Bridge which is part of a £53m contract with the Australian Army.
- The Defence Minister described the firm, which has benefited from £600m-worth of export orders, as 'a model for how companies across the country can thrive on the global stage'.
- He witnessed a 90-minute demo build of a 46-metre bridge from the firm, who are renowned world leaders in the field.
- He visited with the Head of Australian Defence Staff London, Air Commodore Brian Edwards.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew today visited a Stockport company which is world-renowned in building tactical military bridges. While there, he marked the completion of a multi-million-pound deal to supply the Australian Army with the vital logistics equipment.

The £53m deal with Australia is part of £600m-worth of export orders that WFEL has amassed over the past decade. The Defence Minister described the firm as 'a model for how companies across the country can thrive on the global stage' at a time when defence exports have surged by over 50% to £9bn.

The workers also demonstrated their world-class reputation by constructing a 46-metre Dry Support Combat Bridge in just 90 minutes whilst the Minister toured the factory.

The bridges will be used in combat situations providing rapidly-deployable temporary infrastructure ensuring vital equipment and soldiers can navigate their way through the most challenging terrain. The military bridges can also be used in times of crisis during natural disasters maintaining essential lifelines to those who need it the most.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

Through WFEL, Stockport is leading the world in military bridges which help troops defeat our enemies and provide essential aid to people in disaster zones. Not only does WFEL bring hundreds of jobs and millions of pounds of investment to the UK, but it enables relations with some of our closest allies to flourish. As they finish an order for Australia, kick one off for America and look towards more opportunities to build British bridges, they are a model for how companies across the country can thrive on the global

stage and play a key role in the defence of our nation.



Defence Minister sees Stockport firm finishing multi-million-pound military bridge order for Australian Army. Crown copyright.

Work continues at WFEL following the completion of this Australian order as the company has now turned its focus to new orders for the US Army, building upon the 116 military bridges that the company has already built for US forces.

Whilst 90% of its Stockport production is exported overseas, WFEL's contribution to UK defence can be traced back as far as 1915. The company has been designing and producing bridges for the UK military since the 1970s, and the relationship remains to this day – the British Army has over 50 sets in service. They have been proven in the field in the likes of Iraq and Afghanistan.

There are also potential UK opportunities in the pipeline for WFEL, with the company currently bidding to update and replace some of the MOD's military bridging systems. It could become part of the Mechanised Infantry Vehicle (MIV) programme's supply chain, which would support the current 227-strong local workforce.

The opportunities could mean a further boost to investment in the North-West, which already benefits from £2 billion of defence spending – supporting over 12,000 industry jobs in the region.

Ian Anderton, Chief Executive of WFEL, said:

As the leading tactical military bridge maker globally, WFEL continues to work to provide solutions for customers like the Australian Defence Force. Our long-standing relationship with the ADF first began over 30 years ago, when they chose our Medium Girder Bridges. We have been delighted to continue to support them again today, not only with the supply of further MGBs but also with a significant capability enhancement with the latest mechanised Dry Support Bridges.

The adoption of the DSB not only provides the ADF's Manoeuvre Commanders with the ability to cross significant wet or dry gaps quickly and efficiently, it allows a level of inter-operability with an ever-growing user base. We have worked collaboratively with the Commonwealth's Managing Contractor to reduce risk for this contract and are pleased to be providing an off-the-shelf solution to the ADF's wide-gap tactical bridging requirements.



Defence Minister sees Stockport firm finishing multi-million-pound military bridge order for Australian Army. Crown copyright.

The Minister was also accompanied by the Head of Australian Defence Staff London, Air Commodore Brian Edwards.

Head of Australian Defence Staff London, Air Commodore Brian Edwards said:

The Australian-UK bilateral defence relationship has been forged over many years and is incredibly strong and enduring. In recent

times, we have seen an increased emphasis in opportunities for collaboration from a defence industry standpoint. This project introduces into service the latest addition to the Australian Army's suite of combat bridging. It will ensure that the Australian Defence Force has an enhanced gap crossing capability which will enable land forces, both mounted and dismounted, to cross wet and dry gaps in support of operations.

The Australian deal was made up of two contracts, following an internationally competed tender. As a result, WFEL supplied its leading Medium Girder Bridges (MGBs) and Dry Support Bridges (DSBs) to the Australian Defence Force (ADF). This has resulted in a huge boost for the 132 organisations who have benefited from contributing the WFEL supply chain.

The UK enjoys a very close bilateral relationship with Australia, which has strengthened over recent years, with the introduction of annual conferences and close co-operation on many international issues – including a shared commitment to fighting extremism on coalition operations, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Australia also recently decided to choose BAE Systems to build nine British-designed Type 26 warships. The deal, which could be worth up to £20 billion, has been hailed as the biggest Naval ship deal for a decade. It is not only another clear example of Britain's world-leading defence industry, but has been described by the Defence Secretary as 'the dawn of a new era in the relationship between Australia and Great Britain, forging new ties in defence and industry in a major boost as we leave the European Union'.

---

## [News story: New pocket guide for troops to access mental health support](#)

*Updated:* Added the link to the published pocket guide.

The [guide](#), jointly launched by Samaritans and the Ministry of Defence, gives advice on how to identify signs that someone may be having difficulties, suggests ways of offering support and gives information on where help can be found.

All military personnel and reserves, some 200,000 people, will have access to either a hard copy or digital version of the booklet.

The [guide](#) builds on the range of support already available to service personnel who are struggling with their mental health, including access to specialist mental health medical care, training and education on good mental

fitness and the Combat Stress 24-hour Mental Health Helpline.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Mental health issues can affect anyone and I want to ensure no one in our military suffers in silence. It is vital that service personnel know where to turn to in times of crisis, and this guide will raise awareness of the support available.

By helping our people to spot the early signs that someone may be struggling, we give them the best chance of a full recovery.

Specifically designed to promote peer support amongst those serving, the [guide](#) champions “looking after your mates”, and covers:

- Identifying someone struggling to cope with mental health issues
- Understanding the complexity of suicide
- Knowing when to intervene, support and report
- Where to get further support, including the Samaritans service, whose volunteers are available any time, via phone and email or in person at the charity’s 201 branches, and the recently launched Combat Stress 24/7 Military Mental Health Helpline

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

While military mental health continues to be slightly better than the general population, we’re committed to ensuring that those who need help are able to get the support they need.

This guide, alongside our extra investment in mental health care and the 24-hour Mental Health Helpline, will be invaluable in helping our people to help each other.

Samaritans and the MOD have announced several joint initiatives to offer training and support to serving personnel, veterans and their families who are struggling with mental health issues.

The Samaritans programme has been funded by £3.5m from LIBOR, and the guide is the latest part of this programme. A separate booklet is set to be launched for veterans, and the wider military community.

The next stage of the project will include the launch of other peer support tools, specially designed training courses for military personnel and a confidential webchat service. Training for Samaritans volunteers on how address mental health in a military environment will also be introduced.

Samaritans CEO, Ruth Sutherland, said:

Samaritans is committed to bringing the expertise we have gained in

training people to provide peer support to the military, in order to prevent suicides. This is the first step in a journey to provide a variety of support for serving personnel, veterans, reservists and their families.

The [booklet](#) will also help personnel spot signs that colleagues may be having suicidal thoughts and provides information on how such a situation should be approached, and where support is available.

The number of military personnel who take their lives continues to be below rates for the general population, with the military rate of suicide being 8 per 100,000, in 2017, compared to 18 per 100,000 in the general population in 2016.

The Ministry of Defence is now spending £220 million over the next decade to improve mental health services for serving personnel. In February of this year, the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson also announced the establishment of a 24-Hour Mental Health Helpline for serving personnel and their families, funded by the MOD and run by the charity Combat Stress.

The MOD's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is designed to encourage all members of the armed forces to recognise the importance of mental fitness and encourages individuals to seek support if they are struggling with their mental health.

---

## **[News story: UK bolsters support to NATO mission in Afghanistan](#)**

100 Welsh Guards arrived in Afghanistan last week. They travelled with Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson who was in the country for a three-day visit.

The 100 troops are the first group of the additional 440 troops the Prime Minister committed to NATO's capacity building mission in Afghanistan at the NATO Summit in July. The UK plays a leading role in NATO, and this troop uplift will make the UK the third largest contributor to Afghanistan with around 1,100 personnel.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We remain absolutely committed to building an Afghanistan that is a strong security partner for decades to come. A secure and stable Afghanistan helps keep the streets of the UK safe.

The uplift of UK personnel not only underlines our commitment to

Afghanistan and regional security, but also to the Alliance that has been the cornerstone of our defence for 70 years. Thousands of our personnel stand shoulder-to-shoulder with NATO allies around the world. Those here in Afghanistan are just one example of Global Britain in action.

The additional troops will bolster the UK's existing contribution to the UK-led Kabul Security Force (KSF), which plays a critical role in enabling NATO advisors in the city to undertake engagement with the Afghan Government. They will also continue to mentor the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces who are responsible for security in the capital.

The Defence Secretary also travelled to Mazar-e-Sharif where, alongside the German Armed Forces, UK personnel are supporting the expansion of the Afghan Special Police. The force has recently illustrated its increased capability in responding to the InterContinental Hotel and Kabul Military Academy attacks. He met around 40 UK advisors who have been based in the north of the country since January 2018.

He also met President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah, underlining the UK commitment to a secure and stable Afghanistan.

---

## **[Press release: UK expands counter-IED support in Africa](#)**

With the help of the British Army who are working closely with their Kenyan partners to combat terrorism and save lives in East Africa, the facility is expanding into a regional centre of excellence.

Training will be offered to Kenyan security forces and other African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troop-contributing nations in the region. Continued UK support will also include £2.3 million a year from the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and mentoring from the British Army.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

“From supporting counter-terrorist operations in Mali to improvised explosive device disposal training in Kenya, our Armed Forces are helping to build a more secure Africa. By tackling the terrorist threat abroad we are helping to keep our streets safe at home.”

Since 2015, 1,000 military and police personnel from East Africa have been trained by the British Army in identifying and destroying IEDs. Yet, in the same period the use of IEDs has increased by around 300 per cent in Somalia, where casualties are often civilians.

By November 2020, the wing is expected to have developed into a fully-functioning, independent centre of excellence where East African instructors will provide specialised IED disposal training.

The expansion forms part of a new UK-Kenya security agreement which is allowing both countries to keep pace with the changing nature of threats and to renew our cooperation on counter-terrorism, child protection, and regional security. The Prime Minister also announced over £7 million of new UK funding to support AMISOM, as she called on international donors to contribute more to the peacekeeping mission.

Her visit reaffirms that the UK will support the project until it operates independently as a regional and continental centre of excellence.

---

## [News story: LOGNET 18-2: Accelerating Support Innovation 9 October 2018](#)

*Updated:* Updated the title of event to reflect the recent change.

### **Overview**

LOGNET is the Ministry of Defence's support engagement and future development event for the defence support network. It is designed to improve the understanding of UK defence's support requirements, pursue knowledge of developments in academic and commercial capability, whilst reinforcing partnerships through continued engagement. Its outcome is to assist defence in arguing the case for the UK to maintain a credible, highly capable and value for money support capability.

### **Aim of LOGNET 18-2**

This event will focus members of the defence support network on 'Accelerating Support Innovation' to help defence face emerging threats. The event will enable this by detailing the current innovation focus, exploring new technologies and areas of research, introduce departments from both industry and defence who can assist and help to assist rapid procurement.

### **Event content**

LOGNET 18-2 will be split into 5 themed sessions over 1 day:

- defence's innovation agenda
- the potential of autonomy & robotics
- accelerating logistic innovation



- routes to market
- modernising defence support

## Capability awareness demonstrations and stands

During LOGNET there will be the opportunity for companies to demonstrate capabilities through both stands and presentations. Stands will provide small areas to be available during breaks whilst the presentations will allocate time to companies to present to a small military audience in a separate room. These are free and selection will be through considered bids using the following criteria:

- the relevance to logistics within defence
- the relevance to defence logistics CUBE sponsored technologies
- the technology readiness level of the capability
- the genuine level of innovation which the technology displays for the betterment of defence logistics

If you would like to bid for a stand or presentation, please email [DefLog-Strat-CFDMultiuser@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DefLog-Strat-CFDMultiuser@mod.gov.uk) to receive an application proforma.

Applications must be submitted by 10 September 2018 and those selected will be informed by no later than 17 September 2018.

## Confirmed speakers

The event will be opened by the Minister for Defence Procurement, Stuart Andrew MP and closed by the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger KCB, DSO & Bar, OBE, ADC.

## Benefits of attending LOGNET

- understand defence's support requirements to propose superior solutions
- opportunity to influence defence support policy, direction and development
- engage with the future vision of defence support capability and industry integration
- opportunity to conduct business with defence partners
- maintain the equitable relationship between defence and the logistics and engineering enterprise
- opportunity for attendees to forward questions, points and comments directly via an interactive conference software app

## Administration

Lunch and refreshments will be provided and parking at the hotel is free. Accommodation can be booked [here](#) at a discounted rate for LOGNET delegates. Other hotels can be found through price comparison websites.

## Attendance

If your organisation is connected to the logistics and engineering support sector and you would like to engage with the defence logistics community, please feel welcome to sign up and attend [LOGNET 18-2](#).