

News story: Defence dialogue on our EU exit

Minister for Exiting the European Union David Jones and Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin took part in a roundtable with the UK's defence business leaders today (Thursday, 2 March) ahead of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Attendees discussed topics including: tariffs and customs arrangements; skills and movement of employees; research and development funding; and common standards – with an aim of exploiting the opportunities provided by our EU exit.

Participants were also keen to explore how we could further shape our own economy – such as delivering a bold, long term industrial strategy that builds on the UK's strengths – and fully develop our immense trade and investment potential.

Minister for Exiting the European Union, David Jones, said:

The UK is a leader in defence technology and one of the world's largest defence exporters. We are determined that this industry, which is worth more than nine billion pounds to the UK each year, will continue to thrive after our departure from the EU.

Today's meeting has been an excellent opportunity to engage with some of the leading defence industry figures and to discuss opportunities, and priorities, ahead of the EU withdrawal negotiations. I look forward to continuing this dialogue throughout our negotiations.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin, said:

Supported by our rising defence budget and £178 billion Equipment Plan, defence businesses deliver highly skilled, high wage jobs and drive innovation across the UK. We are determined that the UK defence industry will continue to thrive after we leave the EU.

The event, which was organised by the ADS Group and hosted by Rolls-Royce, provided participants with the opportunity to discuss priorities for the defence sector which employs 142,000 people, is worth around £9.4 billion to the UK economy annually and exports around £7.7 billion pounds of goods and services per year.

The Ministers were joined by senior board-level executives from the following businesses and trade associations:

- ADS
- Airbus
- Babcock
- BAE Systems
- Boeing
- Leonardo MW
- Lockheed Martin UK
- Marshalls
- MBDA UK
- QinetiQ
- Raytheon
- Rolls-Royce
- Serco
- TechUK
- Thales UK

It was the latest in a series of roundtables and other engagement activities the government is having with business leaders and key stakeholders up and down the country.

By listening to industry experts' views and discussing opportunities, we are seeking to create certainty in the transition and ensure a new relationship with the EU that works for businesses and Britain.