

Joint statement by Joint Expeditionary Force Defence Ministers

News story

Ministers released a statement welcoming Finland and Sweden's applications for NATO membership.



Today, the Defence Ministers of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) – comprising Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK – met in Oslo.

JEF Defence Ministers discussed current security challenges, including the implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and considered the future development of the JEF to ensure it continues to make an effective contribution to security and stability in its core region of the High North, North Atlantic and Baltic Sea. JEF Defence Ministers also took part in a table-top exercise to practise the JEF's role in responding to an escalating crisis, including the relationship between the JEF and NATO in such a scenario.

All JEF Defence Ministers strongly welcome Finland's and Sweden's applications for NATO membership. Each country has made its sovereign decision to join NATO after a clear, open and democratic process; they share the Alliance's values and are modern, highly capable defence and security partners with whom together we will enhance our collective, transatlantic security.

The allied JEF Partners will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Finland and Sweden in a spirit of solidarity through their accession to NATO membership. We shall work closely with our NATO Allies to integrate both Finland and Sweden into the Alliance as soon as possible. The JEF shall engage in multi-domain activity across our core regions to provide enhanced levels of assurance to our Finnish and Swedish friends as they complete the process of joining NATO. This is in addition to the series of integrated activities and exercises in northern Europe that JEF Defence Ministers agreed at their meeting at Belvoir Castle on 21-22 February 2022.

We reaffirm the shared purpose and common resolve of the JEF to work together to enhance security and stability in northern Europe and be ready to respond to a wide range of contingencies, both in peacetime and at times of crisis and conflict; all in a way which is coherent with, and complementary to, the role of NATO.

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[Future of freight plan](#)

As a proud, free-trading nation, moving goods domestically and abroad has always been the backbone of the United Kingdom's economy. Throughout the pandemic and in our work to deliver Brexit and a global Britain we have been reminded of the vital role that the freight and logistics sector has supporting the supply chains that maintain our economic wellbeing.

Across government, we have worked collectively and collaboratively with industry to mitigate disruption to our supply chains. We have delivered unprecedented action with 33 measures to help the sector tackle the shortage of heavy goods vehicle (HGV) drivers. This included making more driving test slots available than needed and introducing [bootcamps](#), which has seen the number of available HGV drivers stabilise.

We also provided [vital support to ferry and freight operators](#) to weather the start of the pandemic.

This, alongside other actions, has led to sector reports of pressures easing following global challenges on the supply chain and supported this highly effective and adaptable sector to maintain the smooth flow of goods into, out of and across the country.

It is now important that we look to ensure that the sector is ready to grasp opportunities in the medium- and long-term. The [Future of Freight](#) is the first time that the UK government has developed a long-term cross-modal plan for the freight and logistics sector.

The plan is a collaboration with industry and we have engaged stakeholders extensively in its development, including through the [Freight Council](#). It sets out how the UK government and industry have agreed to work more closely together, and with the devolved administrations, to deliver a world-class, seamless flow of freight across our roads, railways, seas, skies and waterways.

The vision set out in the plan is for a freight and logistics sector that is cost-efficient, reliable, resilient, environmentally sustainable and valued by society for its role in supporting our way of life. The plan is also clear

on the importance of the sector to achieving some of the government's strategic priorities.

The sector is ideally placed to support levelling up, driving economic activity across all corners of the UK and providing secure employment, for example, in ports and distribution centres sited in levelling-up priority areas and opportunities in all our communities. The plan also supports our efforts to strengthen the Union improving connectivity across the United Kingdom.

The plan focuses on 5 priority areas of challenge identified with industry. It is the start of a long-term collaboration that will raise the status of freight within government. It sets out government and industry commitment to collaborate on a number of actions:

The National Freight Network

We will identify a National Freight Network (NFN) across road, rail, maritime, aviation, inland waterway and warehouse infrastructure. Our long-term aim will be to remove the barriers which prevent the seamless flow of freight.

Transition to net zero

We want to support the entire sector in its transition to net zero. We will launch the Freight Energy Forum with industry, focused on collaborating with industry to assess future energy and fuel needs and paths to providing the requisite infrastructure.

Planning

We will further embed freight in planning, transport and design policy and guidance, and ensure freight is represented in planning reform. We will publish a call for evidence with industry to support this work.

People and skills

We will expand awareness of the sector and freight careers amongst the public, particularly through the industry-led and government-backed [Generation Logistics communication campaign](#). This will maximise the impact of cross-government employment and skills programmes for the freight sector.

Data and technology

We will maximise opportunities for uptake of innovative technology and digitalisation, including through delivery of a dedicated cross-modal £7 million freight innovation fund.

Moving goods efficiently has underpinned Britain's historical growth, prosperity and global influence.

In today's increasingly interconnected and competitive global economy, we require a world-beating freight and logistics sector that will deliver the

greener, fairer, and stronger economy we need. A sector that will help build a truly global Britain.

I will place a copy of the [Future of freight: a long term plan](#) in the libraries of both Houses.

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[UKEF provides £100 million to help Blyth renewable specialists open new factory and secure exports](#)

- JDR Cables announced intentions to build state-of-the-art submarine cable facility in September 2021
- UK Export Finance has backed a £100 million working capital loan to fund the construction, supporting 170 high quality local jobs in the North-East
- The new site will enhance JDR's operations and unlock international offshore wind contracts as it supports global net-zero goals

[JDR Cable Systems \(JDR\)](#), a global subsea cable supplier and servicer and part of the [TFK Group](#), has received a £100 million working capital loan from Société Générale, HSBC UK and Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (BGK), backed by UK Export Finance (UKEF) to start building its [new state-of-the-art subsea cable manufacturing facility](#) in Cambois, near Blyth, Northumberland to secure more national and international contracts.

JDR Cable Systems is the leading provider of subsea cable technology and offshore services that connects the global offshore energy industry. Global energy companies depend on high-performing and resilient cables to provide clean power created by offshore wind farms to land. Offshore wind farms play a vital role in helping countries reach net-zero commitments and, with [2,571 offshore wind farms and projects](#) in over 50 countries, JDR's exporting potential is significant. It follows the company receiving funding from the government's £160 million Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Support scheme announced in September 2021.

Secretary of State for International Trade, Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

It has never been more important to strengthen energy security in the UK and around the world as we reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and face instability in global energy markets. Our support for UK companies who are enabling the transition, such as JDR, is vital in securing a cleaner and more secure future. This will grow our economy by creating jobs and unlocking vital trading opportunities.

The support from [Société Générale](#), [HSBC UK](#) and BGK backed by UKEF, will enable JDR to build a facility to support the company's production of submarine cables which are used to transport energy from offshore renewables. It is the first step in JDR's long-term plan to expand into better supporting the global renewable energy market and help the UK and other countries across the globe to meet ambitious net-zero goals. Planning approval has been granted to JDR and once planning conditions have been met, the construction of the new facility will begin in the autumn of this year, with the facility set to open in 2024.

UKEF provided support to JDR Cables with an [Export Development Guarantee \(EDG\)](#) which helps UK exporters to access to high-value loan facilities for general working capital to execute projects that will boost international trade. Since launching in 2019, the government has backed over £10 billion in loans across multiple industries through the EDG.

Following this announcement, the Department for International Trade will host the Green Trade & Investment Expo this autumn in the North East. The Expo will showcase how UK companies like JDR Cables can support the UK's clean growth ambitions and the drive to net zero.

We are committed to helping the UK and other countries around the world make vital progress on the green transition. Thanks to UKEF's support, we are looking forward to opening the doors of our state-of-the-art facility in Blyth in 2024 and play an even bigger role in supporting the offshore wind sector across the globe with high quality, specialist subsea cables.

Vijay Raman, UK Head of Development & Structured Export Finance, and Su Ming Lim, UK Co-Head of Advisory & Financing Group at Societe Generale, add:

We are delighted to have advised JDR for the first stage of this new facility, which marks a significant milestone for the company's plans to support the growing offshore wind sector, whilst also creating jobs for local communities.

As the power generation capacity and demand for offshore wind projects gets bigger and bigger, so must the supporting infrastructure such as the power transmission capacity of cables like those manufactured by JDR. This infrastructure is critical to the success of renewable energy projects, as well as for the success of the UK's net zero strategy and the world's energy transition agenda.

JDR plays an important part enabling renewable energy generation

and energy security. This new UK cable facility supports our customer's UK and international growth ambitions and helps further establish the UK's manufacturing capability. At HSBC UK we see our role supporting British businesses in the transition to net zero by providing world-class finance solutions and expert advice. We're proud to have provided funding to JDR, working closely with UK Export Finance, and acting as sustainability coordinator for the financing.

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