

AUKUS Leaders' Level Statement: 5 April 2022

Press release

Statement from the leaders of the Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) partnership.



Today, the leaders of the Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) partnership – Prime Minister Scott Morrison of Australia, Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom, and President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. of the United States – assessed progress under AUKUS.

We reaffirmed our commitment to AUKUS and to a free and open Indo-Pacific. In light of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified, and unlawful invasion of Ukraine, we reiterated our unwavering commitment to an international system that respects human rights, the rule of law, and the peaceful resolution of disputes free from coercion.

We are pleased with the progress in our trilateral programme for Australia to establish a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability. We are fully committed to establishing a robust approach to sharing naval propulsion technology with Australia that strengthens the global non-proliferation regime.

We also committed today to commence new trilateral cooperation on hypersonics and counter-hypersonics, and electronic warfare capabilities, as well as to expand information sharing and to deepen cooperation on defence innovation. These initiatives will add to our existing efforts to deepen cooperation on cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities. As our work progresses on these and other critical defence and security capabilities, we will seek opportunities to engage allies and close partners.

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Delivering Great Britain's energy security

Hello. Thank you to my friend, colleague and senior fellow Chris Skidmore for inviting me today.

Chris and I once co-authored a little-known book together, 'Britannia Unchained'.

While this was drafted in a completely different era – before Brexit, net zero targets and COVID-19 – and the role of the state has invariably changed since...

...there is one lesson that is still true today: the need to unleash the power of competition, innovation, and private enterprise within a free market economy.

From offshore wind to battery technology, the private sector has developed and deployed incredible technology that will change our lives for the better.

The way to decarbonise isn't through a planned economy, but through the British way: science, innovation powered on by free enterprise.

We understand the power of our treasured free-market economy to leverage private capital and unleash Britain's unique entrepreneurial spirit to grow new industries.

This is how we will deliver net zero by 2050 – working in partnership with business, science, and academia.

However, there is a more immediate issue the international community is grappling with.

In light of rising global energy prices, provoked by surging demand after COVID-19 as well as Russia's criminal invasion of Ukraine, there is a renewed focus by national governments on energy security – and clean energy independence.

The wholesale price of gas on the European market has increased by 500% in recent months – so much so that almost every renewable technology is now cheaper.

If it isn't clear enough already: net zero is the solution to the global gas crisis, not the cause.

Expensive gas is the problem. Cheap, clean, homegrown energy is the solution.

Transforming our energy system is no longer just about hitting net zero

targets and tackling climate change – as important as they are – it is also about national security.

Putin's invasion of Ukraine has focused the minds of the international community on the urgent need to diversify away from Russian oil and gas and generate more power domestically.

And even those countries that are not physically dependent on Russian hydrocarbons – like the United Kingdom – we are still vulnerable to prices that are dictated by global markets heavily influenced by Russia – ratcheting up costs for UK consumers.

For as long as we depend on oil and gas – wherever it is from – we are all vulnerable to Putin's malign influence on global markets.

To diminish Putin's malign influence, we not only need to phase out Russian fossil fuels, but also look to domestic sources of energy too.

And with gas prices at record highs, and the price of renewable energy plummeting, we need to accelerate our transition away from expensive gas.

This week, the UK government will set out a new Energy Security Strategy to supercharge cheap renewables and new nuclear, while continuing support our North Sea oil and gas industry.

While international events give a new sense of urgency, the energy transition was already a priority for the UK.

We're not reinventing the wheel here.

The UK has always known that we need to decarbonise and generate more cheap, clean power at home to reduce our exposure to global gas markets we are unable to control.

We were the first major economy to legislate for net zero – a commitment Chris signed.

We've also cut CO2 emissions further and faster than any other G7 country – and expanded renewable energy generation by 500% this decade.

Thanks to our competitive – soon to be annual – renewable energy auctions, the price of supporting offshore wind has plummeted by 70%, while production has rocketed.

We are going to replicate this success in other areas...like solar, tidal and hydrogen – the new super-fuel of tomorrow.

Importantly, however, we also need a reliable source of low carbon baseload when the sun doesn't shine, and the wind doesn't blow.

That has to be nuclear energy.

Most of Britain's nuclear fleet will be decommissioned this decade. We need

to replace what we're losing and go further – from large-scale plants to Small Modular Reactors.

In this week's Energy Security Strategy, we'll reverse 30 years of drift and take the big decisions to generate more nuclear power.

However, the transition to clean, homegrown energy can't happen overnight. It remains the case that there will continue to be an ongoing demand for oil and gas over the coming decades while we transition to clean energy.

So in the meantime, we want to maximise domestic production in the North Sea production to protect jobs and reduce reliance on imports.

The Industrial Revolution began here in the UK before spreading to the US and the rest of the world.

We're on the cusp of another revolution...a green one. The countries that develop the tech of tomorrow will lead future global markets for decades to come.

If the West doesn't lead this global race, we will become even more exposed to forces we cannot control.

We would import even more energy and technology from other countries, and be vulnerable to their excessive price fluctuations.

Old industries that haven't innovated will disappear, jobs will be lost and the burden on the taxpayer will become excruciating.

We need to work together to lead this race for clean energy independence for our citizens.

So whether you're in Cambridge, Massachusetts or Cambridge, England...the question of how we meet our growing energy needs is a matter of great importance.

This transition will only be a success if bright people like yourselves take an interest in these issues.

So, thank you for listening today.

UK to host world-leading Nato Defence Innovation Headquarters

The United Kingdom, in partnership with Estonia, will host the European HQ of a programme for NATO allies to accelerate, test, evaluate and validate new technologies that address critical defence challenges and contribute to

Alliance deterrence.

Announced today by the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) will see transatlantic cooperation on critical technologies and help NATO work more closely with industry and academia.

The UK's accelerator will be twinned with a new accelerator in Tallinn, Estonia to encourage the sharing of expertise, explore the use of virtual sites to trial vehicles, including autonomous ones, and test cyber innovations.

As hosts, the UK and Estonia will:

- Support start-up companies with funding, guidance and business expertise through twinned accelerator networks.
- Offer the use of 'deep tech' test centres to assess technological solutions to military problems, utilising the Defence BattleLab.
- Work with NATO to develop a virtual marketplace to connect start-ups with trusted investors, as well as a rapid acquisition service to connect products to buyers at pace.

UK Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace said:

The UK and Estonia are two of the most innovative countries in NATO and our hosting of DIANA will harness that innovation for the benefit of all Allies tackling future military threats.

The UK has a vibrant tech community, combining the academia, financiers, and high-tech start-ups that make it an ideal place to develop the next generation of military technologies.

Estonia was the natural partner for the UK given its international leadership in cyber, autonomy and AI, and our close partnership forged through the Enhanced Forward Presence.

Ranked in the world's top ten innovative universities, Imperial College London will bring together academia, industry and government by hosting the headquarters of DIANA and a DIANA Accelerator at the Innovation Hub (IHUB) in the White City Innovation District, in a space shared with the UK's Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA), Major Defence Contractors and The US Directors of Defence's Tri-Service Office.

Supported by DASA, the UK and Estonia DIANA HQ is expected to be operational from July 2022. DIANA is essential to delivering the NATO 2030 vision and ensuring that the Alliance develops the military capabilities needed to deter

and defend against existing and future threats.

Estonian Defence Minister, Kalle Laanet.

The goal of DIANA is to support deep technologies companies that contribute to defence. It will bring together talented innovators with new technologies end-users in the area of defence. We are very glad to see that the good cooperation we have with the UK will expand even further and also encompass our universities and private sector more,

Cooperation between the UK and Estonia is working well on every level because we have a common understanding of defence policy. Good relations with Allies is a cornerstone of Estonian defence policy, and a successful start to this programme for us is a sign that this cornerstone is strong.

Co- Director, Institute for Security Science and Technology, Imperial College London, Professor Deeph Chana, said:

As one of the top STEM-B universities in the world, in one of the most diverse cities, Imperial College London is uniquely placed to power a progressive, responsible and holistic dual-use security and defence technology innovation program by hosting DIANA. Coordinated through our Institute for Security Science and Technology and Business School we're committed to working on disruptive research and innovation to reduce insecurity and to deal with global threats and challenges.

DIANA will support all seven of the key emerging and disruptive technologies that NATO has identified as priorities: artificial intelligence, big-data processing, quantum-enabled technologies, autonomy, biotechnology, hypersonics and space.

[Rivercraft: Minecraft game inspires young environmental champions](#)

Children and young people across the world can learn more about climate change, the environment, and reducing the impacts of flooding thanks to a new Minecraft: Education Edition game, 'Rivercraft'.

Based on the £54.7million flood risk management scheme in Preston and South

Ribble, the in-game Preston world is the first activity of its kind that uses Artificial Intelligence to map a region and convert it into an interactive Minecraft map. The games will be available globally and in multiple languages to be used in educational and home environments across the world within Minecraft: Education Edition. This established educational tool is used by millions of educators and students in 112 countries, with hundreds of free lessons and curriculum, teacher trainings, and learning programs.

The Environment Agency and Microsoft will work alongside experts in youth engagement, BlockBuilders to draw users into three themed games. The Preston world will encourage young people to learn about flood risk management, climate change, local human geography, engineering and the environment.

- Game 1 – Managing Flooding. This game will focus on building the Preston and South Ribble flood defences. The player will be tasked with constructing various types of flood prevention measures including natural flood management, walls and embankments as well as flood storage areas and flood gates. Players will learn about the pros and cons of each approach and their suitability within local communities
- Game 2 – Flood Prevention. This game will explore how individual actions can alleviate climate change and how understanding flood risk can reduce the damage to people and property.
- Game 3 – Our Local Environment. This game will begin on the riverbank where the player will be tasked with conducting an ecological survey using their digital workbook and camera. The aim of this game will be for the surveyors to spot and record some of our most beloved wildlife species including water voles and otters.

With a drive to encourage young people into environment based careers, the characters in the game have also been adapted to reflect the diversity of the local project team and the communities the Environment Agency serves.

Andy Brown, Flood Risk Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

This is an amazing opportunity for students and a project we are proud to be a part of. Not only will young people learn about a major flooding scheme in the UK, but they will also discover more about climate change, the environment, flooding and the types of roles available for careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Introducing the next generation to the brilliant career opportunities we have here at the Environment Agency is key if we are to deliver our vital flood and coastal defence projects. This includes the Preston and South Ribble Scheme, which will directly reduce flood risk to 4,700 homes and businesses.

We want to help everyone discover their drive, passion and enthusiasm for the environment and the jobs available within that sector. We can't wait to see Rivercraft and the Preston world brought to life across the globe.

Justin Edwards, Director of Learning Programmes, Minecraft, said:

We know that people around the world love Minecraft, and so it is really rewarding for us to see Minecraft encouraging students to talk about and engage with environmental issues.

The game provides an opportunity not just to get to know the flooding scheme in Preston and South Ribble, but also understand real world impact in a safe and fun way. The game also shows how communities are impacted, not just individuals. We're committed to making a better world through the power of play and this project is at the forefront of that vision.

You can [read more about Rivercraft](#).

Notes to editors

- Rivercraft is a world developed by the EA in Minecraft Education Edition and is based on the Environment Agency £54.7million flood risk management scheme in Preston and South Ribble.
- This scheme started construction in October 2021 and will directly reduce flood risk to 4,700 homes and businesses from Preston Riversway up towards the M6 and Higher Walton.
- The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is contributing £6.525M towards the scheme and funding has been secured from multiple sources including the Department for Education.
- Construction of the scheme will be completed by summer 2023 and in line with ERDF timescales.
- Work also continues on the design of the defences for the later stages of the scheme in Walton-le-Dale, Frenchwood and Higher Walton.
- The scheme will deliver, improved access to the River Ribble including for emergency access on Strand Road through the remediation of the old slipway to the river.
- The scheme will also create additional environmental improvements including habitat creation in the Ribble Sidings area (during 2023). Revetment work to stabilise the river banks will also create additional bank habitat and wider footpaths in some of the more narrow areas around the entrance to Miller Park and along Riverside Road.
- Four new sports pitches will also be created as a permanent scheme legacy
- All scheme information can be viewed at www.thefloodhub.co.uk

[Severn flood defences undergoing](#)

thorough checks

- Essential work happening to maintain defences in top condition
- Thousands of properties protected from devastating impact of flood defences during storms

The Environment Agency is carrying out inspections and maintenance to flood defences along the River Severn following the February storms when the defences were in operation providing benefit to thousands of homes and businesses.

Storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin hit the UK in February, seeing the Met Office issue 2 rare red warnings for Eunice which was the most severe and damaging storm to affect England and Wales for many years.

A forecast tidal surge on the Severn Estuary threatened flooding to thousands. This was followed by heavy rainfall in the Welsh Mountains which saw the River Severn rise to extremely high levels in its upper reaches resulting in flooding of some properties in the area.

Rhys McCarthy, Flood Risk Manager for the Environment Agency said:

February brought 3 named storms in succession which posed a significant risk of flooding to communities along the River Severn. We were however prepared, with thousands of properties benefiting from the protection that our defences provided. These defences included flood walls and embankments, flood storage areas, temporary barriers, property flood resilience measures, pumps and flood gates.

We are now inspecting all of our flood defences to work out where any essential repair works are needed to make sure they are all in good working order and fully operational, ready to use again. This work includes removing any blockages in rivers and culverts, clearing debris from trash screens and checking the operation of sluices. Demountable and temporary defences and pumps have already been cleaned and checked for damage.

The Environment Agency issued 12 severe flood warnings and a total of 118 flood alerts and warnings during the storms and deployed all of its flood assets along the Rivers Severn and Wye, including temporary and demountable barriers at Shrewsbury, Ironbridge, Hereford and Bewdley.

Flooding can have a devastating impact, which is why protecting people and communities is the Environment Agency's top priority. It is clear that we are already seeing the impacts of climate change in the UK and around the world, which is why urgent action is needed to adapt the impacts of climate emergency at the same time as reducing emissions.

Community teams from the Environment Agency, Worcestershire County Council, Shropshire Council, the National Flood Forum, Severn Trent Water and district councils have also been out speaking to communities throughout Worcestershire and Shropshire.

Anyone can [sign up for free flood warnings](#) and take action to make sure they [know what to do in case of flooding](#).

You can check your flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date with the latest situation at [GOV.UK](#), call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or follow @EnvAgency on Twitter for the latest flood updates.

- Over a 9 day period from 12 to 20 February 2022, more than 100 millimetres of rain fell widely across upland areas, and 200 millimetres across parts of Wales. Much of Wales and northern England received the whole-month February 1991-2022 average rainfall, with some locations more than 150% of average.
- Flooding to property can occur directly and indirectly from the River Severn. Indirect flooding can occur due to rising groundwater with cellars filling with water, and from surface water and sewers when the rise in river level means the sewers cannot discharge to the River Severn.
- As part of our management of flood risk on the River Severn we consider a range of options in terms of actions to reduce flood risk and increase flood resilience, this includes construction of flood protection schemes such as those in Bewdley and Upton-Upon-Severn, enhanced maintenance of the River Severn clearing blockages and removing debris, tree work, weed cutting, maintenance of earth embankments, preventing inappropriate development in the floodplain. When considering options for reducing flood risk we have to look at a number of factors such as overall benefit, cost and impact on the environment.