

News story: Defence Minister launches new Army apprentice awards

As the largest provider of apprentices in the UK, the Ministry of Defence is celebrating the tenth National Apprenticeship Week by honouring its apprentices right across the country and across the services.

To kick start the week, the British Army announced they will host their first ever Apprenticeship Awards in 2018.

Announcing the awards at Gibraltar Barracks in Camberley, Defence Minister Mark Lancaster introduced some of the highest performing soldier apprentices who have recently qualified in their field, including Margate-born Lance Corporal Tristan Willis, who is pursuing a career in the infantry.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

As the UK's largest apprenticeship provider, we are delivering a huge range of training and skills right across defence, and it's great to see the likes of Tristan taking advantage of that. I'm sure the awards launched today will motivate more like him to excel in their field and help the military to continue leading the way for British apprenticeships.

24 year-old Army apprentice Lance Corporal Tristan Willis of the 1st Battalion, Mercian Regiment said:

I came into the Army to gain some qualifications. So far I've done my level 1 and 2 in both Maths and English, have also gained a Public Services Apprenticeship and I'm currently enrolled to do an Engineering apprenticeship, despite not having any experience with cars or anything like that.



Defence Minister Mark Lancaster introduced some of the highest performing soldier apprentices. Crown copyright.

The RAF Apprenticeship Awards, now in its sixth year, will also take place today at RAF Honington. The annual event is a chance for the RAF to promote and celebrate the achievements of their valued apprentice mechanics, technicians and engineers.

Elsewhere, in London this week, the Navy will be celebrating their apprentices on-board the Type 23 frigate HMS St Albans which is docked alongside Thames Quay at West India Dock this week.

Two apprentices from each service, along with one of the MOD's many civilian apprentices, will be attending an exclusive lunch reception at the House of Commons on Thursday in an event aimed at recognising the esteem in which apprenticeships are held.

Together with industry, the MOD is working to achieve three million apprenticeship starts by 2020 as part of the Government's manifesto.

[News story: Defence Secretary](#)

underlines UK commitment to European security

Speaking at a meeting of European Union Defence Ministers in Brussels, Sir Michael Fallon called on the EU to step up cooperation with NATO in order for the two organisations to more effectively tackle shared security challenges, including hybrid warfare and cyber.

Sir Michael also called for an improvement in Europe's performance in building national capabilities that can be made available to the EU and NATO. This requires more defence spending and better investment in key equipment.

Britain's commitments in 2017 underline the leading role in European Security the UK will continue to play. This year, Britain is leading NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, a Brigade-size force which is ready and willing to respond to any threat. This spring, the UK will also deploy a battle group of around 800 personnel to lead in Estonia NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence.

The Defence Secretary also confirmed Britain's strong role in EU missions and operations. HMS Echo is currently helping to tackle people smugglers in the Mediterranean, as part of the EU's mission Operation Sophia. Royal Navy deployments to the operation have helped destroy over 120 smuggling boats, apprehending 20 suspected smugglers in the process, and have helped to rescue 10,000 people from the high seas.

Britain also has over 150 UK personnel committed to EU missions and operations, including in Bosnia, Mali and Somalia, demonstrating Britain's global reach.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

We are leaving the EU but we will continue to cooperate with our European partners on defence and security. This includes playing our part in the mission in the Mediterranean, rescuing migrants and tackling people smuggling.

Today I have urged the EU to cooperate more closely with NATO, to avoid unnecessary duplication and to work together on new threats, including cyber.

Sir Michael called on the EU and NATO to redouble their efforts on cooperation, noting that while good progress has been made, more work needed to be done, particularly on cyber, hybrid, maritime and coordinated exercises.

Today's meeting also brought forward improvements to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations, through the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), to help improve planning and conduct

of the training missions (known as non-executive missions) and to enhance civilian and military working. Important improvements to the agreement, suggested by the UK, were agreed today, including limiting the authority of the Director of the MPCC, and avoiding duplication with NATO structures.

[News story: Defence Secretary applauds service of globally deployed Scots](#)

During a visit to Edinburgh, Sir Michael met soldiers from Scots-based Army units. Many have either recently returned, or are about to deploy on missions with the UK's allies overseas.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Scotland is on the frontline defending the United Kingdom from growing threats at sea, in the air, and on land. Whether countering Daesh, improving security in Afghanistan, or playing a leading role in peace-keeping missions, Scottish troops deserve our gratitude for the incredible job they do.

At any time, at least 20% of the troops from Army units in Scotland are actively involved in operational, defence engagement or training with other nations.

Midlothian-based personnel of The Royal Highland Fusiliers, Second Battalion the Royal Regiment of Scotland (2 SCOTS) are part of the UN mission in South Sudan. They are also supporting NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and is currently deployed to Kenya where it is leading battle group training for 950 personnel.

Scotland's 51 Brigade have taken part in exercises with the Emiratis, Kuwaitis and the Qatari Armed Forces.

Scotland is also home to the UK's nuclear deterrent submarines at Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde, and the Quick Response Aircraft at RAF Lossiemouth.

News story: Appointment to the board of the Environment Agency

Joanne Segars OBE has been appointed to the board of the Environment Agency by Environment Secretary, Andrea Leadsom.

The appointment will take effect from 1 March 2017 for three years.

Joanne is the Chief Executive of the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association, having originally joined the organisation as Director of Policy. She is a board member of the Pensions Infrastructure Platform and Pensions Europe, with experience spent as Chair of both.

Joanne is also on the board of Pension Quality Mark Ltd. Joanne is a founding governor of the Pensions Policy Institute and sits on its council. She is also a Director of TUC Stakeholder Trustees Ltd.

Formally, Joanne was Chair of the Scheme Advisory Board for the Local Government Pension Scheme; a member of the Secretary of State's Advisory Group on Stakeholder Pensions; and a board member of the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority.

Board members provide non-executive leadership challenge and support to the Environment Agency's executive through regular board meetings, committees and groups. They also undertake individual lead roles on relevant issues and with local operational teams.

All appointments to the Environment Agency board are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. The appointment complies with the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (which was superseded by the Ministerial Governance Code on Public Appointments in January 2017).

The Environment Agency is a Non-Departmental Public Body, set up under the Environment Act 1995 to take an integrated approach to environmental protection and enhancement in England. The Environment Agency has major responsibilities in flood management, water resources and quality, climate change, land quality, chemicals, pollution prevention and control, waste, conservation and biodiversity, fisheries conservation, air quality and navigation.

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