

Defence Secretary meets with Nordic partners amid Russian military build-up

The Defence Secretary reaffirmed the UK's determination to support European allies and uphold international stability on a three-day visit to Scandinavia this week.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace met with ministers in Sweden, Finland and Norway to discuss Russia's continued aggression and military build-up on Ukraine's border.

The ministers also discussed increasing competition in the High North and how access to the region can be managed responsibly.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace MP said:

The UK and our Nordic partners are united in our approach to upholding European security.

My discussions this week have been directly about deepening bilateral relations, shared security and the consequences of Russian aggression towards Ukraine.

Our discussions were clear that a Russian invasion of Ukraine would be a strategic mistake, violating the most basic freedoms and sovereignty.

Britain and the Nordic countries have a long and shared history. Our European neighbours and allies remain vital partners as we work together to defend our common values, counter shared threats and build resilience in our neighbourhood – the UK will always stand with them.

In Sweden, the Defence Secretary met with his counterpart Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist.

The Defence Secretary then travelled to Finland where he met with President Sauli Niinistö, Foreign Minister Haavisto and Defence Minister Antti Kaikkonen.

Finally, the Defence Secretary met with his Norwegian counterpart Odd Roger

Enoksen.

The UK's Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper set out the UK's commitment to the High North.

As a close neighbour to the Arctic, the UK is committed to working with partners such as Sweden, Finland and Norway to ensure that increasing access to the region and its resources is managed safely, sustainably and responsibly.

Sweden, Finland and Norway are all members of the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) – 10 nations working together to deliver forces at high readiness, across a range of roles, complementing NATO and European security.

[Ambitious proposals to strengthen our protected landscapes announced](#)

Plans to boost nature recovery and safeguard England's iconic national parks for future generations have been set out today by Environment Secretary George Eustice.

The proposals, which will be subject to consultation, are set out in the Government's response to Julian Glover's independent [Landscapes Review](#) which looked at whether the protections for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are still fit for purpose. The Government's response sets out ambitious changes to increase access to nature and ensure protected landscapes can deliver more for climate, nature, people and places for the next 70 years and beyond, as we build back greener from the pandemic and level up all parts of the country.

A new national landscapes partnership will bring together those responsible for managing England's National Parks and AONBs to collaborate, share knowledge and tackle common objectives such as nature recovery and improved public access.

By harnessing their collective strengths whilst preserving their independence, the partnership will support local leadership to work together nationally, including by carrying out campaigns, organising events and offering volunteering opportunities that bring people closer to nature.

The 12-week consultation will also ask for views on proposals to drive nature recovery within our landscapes and support for the communities that live and work within them, such as the design and delivery of new agri-environment schemes and an ambitious management plan for each area.

This announcement forms part of the Government's wider action to recover and

restore nature, delivering on the pledge within the 25 Year Environment Plan to protect 30% of the UK's land by 2030 and commitments to achieve net zero by 2050.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are amongst our nation's greatest and most cherished natural wonders. The comprehensive set of measures set out today represents a new chapter in the story of our protected landscapes and we have worked closely with stakeholders to carefully form our response.

These reforms will play a pivotal role in meeting our international commitment to protect 30% of land for biodiversity by 2030 as we build back greener.

The package of measures announced today reflects many of Julian Glover's recommendations, as part of a renewed and strengthened focus on nature recovery in our protected landscapes and to make them greener and more accessible to everyone.

Chair of Natural England, Tony Juniper said:

From the beauty of the sandy beaches of the Scillies to the rugged glory of Northumberland, our protected landscapes are integral to our national identity, our health and wellbeing and our country's prosperity.

As Government's statutory landscape advisor, Natural England has a pivotal role in making sure our National Parks and AONBs are beautiful, thriving places. We welcome this package of measures which will help them deliver even more for the whole of society and combat the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. We look forward to playing a leading role in the national landscapes partnership and working closely with Government, protected landscape bodies and stakeholders to deliver these ambitious proposals.

Julian Glover, who led the review, said:

This is our chance to make England's landscapes more beautiful, better for people who visit and live in them and far more alive with nature. Our countryside is there for all of us, but from the heaths of the New Forest to the high fells of the Lake District, it is under pressure in an urban world. It won't be enough just to try to conserve what we have inherited – we can change the story from decline to recovery, to make them greener, more welcoming and full of hope. The review I led showed what needs to be done and I'm

pleased the Government has agreed to act.

Protected landscapes play an essential role in tackling climate change, protecting biodiversity, and supporting the nation's health and wellbeing. [Evidence from Natural England](#) shows that almost half the population say that they are spending more time outside than before the pandemic, while the majority of adults surveyed by [Forest Research](#) agreed that their level of happiness when in nature has increased.

However, the pandemic has also highlighted the inequalities of access to greenspaces, with [evidence from Natural England](#) demonstrating that approximately a third of those on the lowest incomes visited a natural space in a typical week during the pandemic, compared to almost 60% amongst those on high incomes. Today's measures aim to increase people's access to nature, so more of England can benefit from having access to beautiful nature-rich landscapes.

Recognising the need to raise the profile of great British landscapes – particularly AONBs – as national assets, the 12-week consultation will also seek views on proposals, including:

- encourage improved access to our protected landscapes and nature for all parts of society, particularly where this supports improved public health and wellbeing;
- continue support for the local communities that live and work in protected landscapes, helping preserve our heritage for future generations;
- drive nature recovery and nature-based solutions within protected landscapes to help address the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change; and
- apply structural changes and resources to support our protected landscapes in delivering more for nature, climate, people and places.

The consultation closes on Saturday 9 April 2022 and can be found [here](#).

[Keeping you safe at the coast for 200 years: HM Coastguard celebrates landmark birthday](#)

Two hundred years of saving lives along the UK coast and at sea, as well as coordinating rescues for those in distress in international waters, is being marked this year as HM Coastguard celebrates its milestone anniversary.

It was on 15 January 1822, that HM Coastguard was formally brought into

existence and has been working to keep people safe at the coast and sea ever since.

Today (15 January) in honour of that actual birthday, coastguards across all four home nations are casting throwlines as a symbol of the service's dedication – past and present.

Throwlines, which form part of the lifesaving kit used by coastguard teams, will be cast into the seas around England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland at 11am, with each team operating under the latest COVID-19 guidance for the local areas.

21st century coastguard rescue team

Over the past two centuries, HM Coastguard has gone from strength to strength. In 2022, coastguard operations centres coordinate responses to emergency situations at the coast calling on 310 Coastguard Rescue Teams – made up of 3500 dedicated volunteers – and using 10 search and rescue helicopter bases.

Although the way in which we operate has changed beyond recognition in the last two centuries, HM Coastguard continues to look to the future. Innovation has always been a driver – whether it be pushing forward state of the art technology in the national network of maritime rescue coordination centres or leading the way in rope, water and mud techniques.

Last month (December) HM Coastguard began to implement its new updated search and rescue radio network which uses fibre technology. More than £175million has been invested to upgrade the Coastguard's national radio network across all 165 sites over the next two years. This will improve and future proof its communication infrastructure and ensure that it remains able to communicate and exchange data quickly and reliably in order to co-ordinate rescues and save lives.

HM Coastguard aviation: fixed-wing aircraft, helicopter and drone

The service continues to adapt to changes – in the last few years providing mutual aid and support during events and incidents to other emergency partners. During the pandemic, coastguards supported the NHS, attended the G7 and COP26 in 2021 and are called in to support during national emergencies including flooding or supplying water to stranded drivers.

HM Coastguard provides training to search and rescue authorities around the world and also shares knowledge on a mutual basis with others. A key player with the International Maritime Organization, HM Coastguard's input and insight around the obligations of SOLAS (The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea) is sought and valued.

The service is currently working hard to reduce its carbon footprint and is

aiming to make its UK-wide fleet of vehicles electric wherever possible over the next five years.

Following trials, six electric vehicles have already been purchased, with 19 more currently being procured for use across the UK. Opportunities to electrify the fleet where operationally possible continue to be identified, with the trialling and integrating of electric models as they arrive on the market.

And with technology ever evolving, the service will continue to strive to be at the forefront of innovation to carry out its life-saving work.

Maritime Minister, Robert Courts said:

Congratulations HM Coastguard on their 200-year anniversary. I am immensely proud and humbled by the continued dedication and professionalism from the staff and volunteers which ensures everyone's safety on our shores and around our coast.

HM Coastguard is the backbone of our maritime sector and the nation is indebted to its incredible workforce which continues to deliver an exceptional service.

Claire Hughes, Director of HM Coastguard said:

When you look at how we started and where we are now, it's easy to celebrate the innovation and development that can be seen throughout the service. And yet, we are far more proud of the people, the volunteers and the staff who throughout two centuries have continued to strive to keep people safe at the coast and out at sea. We always have and always will respond to those in distress.

While this milestone is an opportunity for us to look back with pride on what we've achieved, we have always looked to the future, and I'm proud that we continue to look for ways in which to improve and save lives. I'm proud of the commitment, the dedication and selfless sacrifice and I'm proud of how the service has developed and continues to do so.

Coastguard magic lantern 1890

17th/18th century

As soon as medieval taxes were charged on imports and exports, people begin smuggling. By 1743 the estimate is that half the tea drunk in Britain was illegally imported. Smuggling is highly profitable, making local people live in fear, with violent reprisals on informers and the murder of revenue

officers, while corruption enables smugglers to evade harsh penalties.

1790s

Henry Greathead designs the first original lifeboat in South Shields. Twenty other locations place orders.

1808

A Captain Manby experiments with firing mortars to carry lines offshore to stricken ships. The "Elizabeth", 150 yards out at sea sees the first life save due to this method. Cots hung below safety lines soon follow.

1809

The Board of Customs forms the Preventative Water Guard to fight smugglers and this small force uses boats to patrol every bay and cove.

1816

The guard is placed under the Treasury. At each station the chief officer and chief boatman are experienced naval seamen or fishermen. In bad weather they form a shore patrol. Although created to end smuggling, the Preventative Water Guard quickly acquires extra duties and are instructed to take responsibility of shipwrecks to safeguard cargoes and vessels from looters. They are also trained with lifesaving equipment.

1821

The Preventative Water Guard is recognised as a major force against smuggling and it is recommended that it is again controlled by the Board of Customs. In a minute dated 15 January 1822, the Treasury accept the proposal noting the new force will be called 'Coast Guard' which is, in effect, the birth certificate of HM Coastguard.

15th Jan 1822

The Coastguard was formed in 1822 by the amalgamation of three services set up to prevent smuggling:

- the Revenue Cruisers
- the Riding Officers
- the Preventive Water Guard

[PM call with President Erdoğan: 14](#)

January 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.



The Prime Minister spoke to Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan this afternoon.

They shared significant concerns about the build-up of Russian troops on Ukraine's border, and emphasised NATO's collective resolve to avoid further escalation. They committed to continue working through NATO to reach a resolution.

The leaders also agreed to further strengthen our bilateral security and defence cooperation, and to boost trade and investment between the UK and Turkey.

They welcomed the positive outcome at the COP26 Summit and the Prime Minister looked forward to working closely with President Erdoğan to drive further progress on climate change, including on an ambitious emissions reduction target from Turkey.

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North Korea missile tests, January 2022: FCDO statement

Press release

FCDO spokesperson statement on the DPRK missile tests that took place on 14 January 2022.



An FCDO spokesperson said:

We are deeply concerned that North Korea has again conducted two short-range ballistic missile tests. These tests are a clear violation of UN Security Council Resolutions and a threat to regional peace and security.

Alongside our allies and partners, the UK is committed to peace on the Korean Peninsula, upholding the rules-based international system and securing an end to North Korea's illegal activities.

It is critical that sanctions which target the DPRK's unlawful weapons development remain in place while its programmes exist.

We urge North Korea to refrain from further provocations, and to return to dialogue with the US.

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