

British Army to possess most lethal tank in Europe

Press release

The British Army will receive a fleet of 148 Challenger 3 main battle tanks as part of an £800 million contract with Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL), the Defence Secretary has announced today.



An £800-million contract for 148 Challenger 3 battle tanks has been signed.

Based in Telford, the contract will create 200 jobs at Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL), including 130 engineers and 70 technicians, with a further 450 jobs to be established throughout the wider supply chain across the West Midlands, Glasgow, Newcastle upon Tyne and the Isle of Wight.

The new tank will carry additional high velocity ammunition able to travel at faster speeds with an increased range. Ammunition will also be programmed digitally from a new turret with a 120 millimetre smoothbore gun. This cutting-edge tank will also feature an upgraded engine with a new cooling system and suspension to improve accuracy when firing in transit.

A new automatic target detection and tracking system will be used to identify threats, whilst new thermal long-range cameras will be fitted as part of a day/night image system.

Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace said:

This represents a huge shift in the modernisation of our land forces through the increased lethality of Challenger 3. This pioneering new technology allows us to deliver immense warfighting capabilities in battlespaces filled with a range of enemy threats.

The £800 million investment will also create hundreds of highly-

skilled jobs across the country ensuring our soldiers benefit from the very best of British engineering.

Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Chris Tickell CBE said:

The announcement of the Integrated Review has provided us with a huge amount of opportunity and left the Army in a good place. The integration of Challenger 3 is key to ensure our success and integration in the land domain, ensuring that we meet our international commitments and continue to protect the nation.

As part of the Army's commitments to adapt to meet future threats, Challenger 3 will be fully digitalised integrating information from all domains whilst being able to travel up to 60mph. The Challenger 3 tank is being developed to replace the current Challenger 2 tank which has been in service since 1998. Full Operating Capability for the tank is planned for 2030, with initial operating capability expected by 2027.

Director Land Equipment for DE&S, Major General Darren Crook said:

This is a significant step forward for Defence and UK industry as we continue to develop and modernise our fleet of land vehicles and I am looking forward to working closely with our industry partners to deliver the very best capabilities we can for the British Army.

As outlined in the recent Defence Command Paper, the British Army will be more deployable and better protected in the face of our adversaries. The announcement of Challenger 3 reaffirms our commitment to invest £3-billion into Army equipment over the next decade, delivering a modernised, adaptable and expeditionary fighting force.

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[Government confirms traffic light list ahead of cautious return to](#)

international travel

- UK government confirms international travel can gradually resume from 17 May, as 12 countries and territories are added to the 'green list'
- strict rules on testing and quarantine will remain in place to protect public health and our vaccination programme, while people should not travel to 'amber' and 'red' countries for leisure
- international travel will be different as passengers are warned to expect additional checks and longer queues at the border

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has today (7 May 2021) announced that international travel can begin to safely reopen from 17 May, allowing people to go on foreign holidays to [green list](#) countries.

The 'Stay in the UK' regulation will lift on 17 May, meaning leisure travel from England will no longer be illegal. However, speaking at a No10 press conference this afternoon, the Transport Secretary outlined how strict border control measures will remain in place as international travel gradually resumes. Different levels of restriction will be applied to individuals returning to England from countries based on the traffic light system set out by the Global Travel Taskforce.

People are [being guided on where they can safely visit](#) without needing to quarantine on return to England – starting with the additions of Portugal including the Azores and Madeira, Israel and [Jerusalem](#) and Singapore among others to the 'green list'. They will still need to [take a pre-departure test](#) up to 72 hours before their return travel, and a single PCR test on or before day 2 of arrival into England – this can be [booked in the same way as is in place now, through private test providers](#).

Our priority remains to protect public health, which is why the 'green' list is currently very small, with only 12 countries and territories. As the epidemiological situation improves worldwide, it is expected that there will be more opportunities for leisure travel with a greater number of destinations added.

In total, 12 countries and territories have been added to the green list. Some of these include: Portugal including the Azores and Madeira; Australia; New Zealand; Singapore; Brunei; Iceland; Faroe Islands; Gibraltar; Falkland Islands; and Israel and [Jerusalem](#). However, many 'green list' countries will continue to place restrictions on UK travellers, including quarantine measures, so passengers are encouraged to check all requirements and [FCDO travel advice](#) before they book any foreign travel.

Given that the virus is still spreading in many parts of the world, people should not be travelling to [amber](#) and [red](#) countries for leisure. 10-day [managed hotel quarantine requirements](#) will remain in place for those permitted to return to England from 'red' countries, and [quarantine at home alongside stringent testing](#) will be required for those returning from 'amber' destinations.

Countries have been allocated by ministers according to the latest scientific data, so quarantine and testing requirements on return from those countries are appropriate to the risk of coronavirus and variants of concern.

The lists will be reviewed every 3 weeks, informed by public health advice, including the Joint Biosecurity Centre's assessment of the latest data. These regular review points will allow the government to balance helping the public to understand COVID requirements when travelling to England while allowing us to constantly evaluate the risk for different countries.

The government will also be publishing a green watchlist in the future, to provide an indication when a country is identified as a candidate for a changing country. All measures will be kept under review and further action may be taken to protect public health.

Countries will decide whether they require proof of COVID vaccination for entry, and it is the traveller's responsibility to check individual requirements. If needed, people in England who have both vaccine doses will be able to demonstrate their COVID vaccination status via the NHS app from 17 May. Those without access to the app can request a letter from the NHS proving their vaccination status by calling 119, from 17 May. Test results will not be stated in the app and the process for booking and presenting test results for travel remains unchanged. The government is working with the devolved administrations to ensure this facility is available to everyone across the UK.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Today marks the first step in our cautious return to international travel, with measures designed above all else to protect public health and ensure we don't throw away the hard-fought gains we've all strived to earn this year.

This is a new way of doing things, and people should expect travel to be different this summer – with longer checks at the borders, as part of tough measures to prevent new strains of the virus entering the country and putting our fantastic vaccine rollout at risk.

On top of this, to continue protecting the country against new variants of coronavirus, from 4am Wednesday 12 May, the Maldives, Nepal and Turkey will be added to the [red list](#).

When travel does restart, it will be different, most notably when returning to the UK. Reopening international travel, while maintaining 100% health checks at the border, means longer waits are likely – passengers from any destination will still be required to fill out a Passenger Locator Form (PLF), and show proof of a pre-departure test negative result. While holidaymakers may notice longer than usual queues, it is vital we maintain our stringent border checks – which are among the toughest in the world – to prevent new strains of the virus entering the country and putting our vaccine roll out at risk.

The government is constantly trying to improve processes to make them as efficient as possible to minimise wait times, and will be committing to increasing Border Force resources to manage increased demand. This includes deploying additional Border Force officers where high volumes of passengers are expected.

Border Force will be checking that arriving passengers have complied with current health measures, and passengers can help reduce delays by completing all necessary requirements before entering the country. We continue to urge airlines to carry out all necessary checks or risk facing fines of £2,000 for each passenger they carry who does not have a valid Pre-Departure Test Certificate, and £2,000 for each passenger who does not have a completed PLF.

The government will also continue with plans to integrate health measure checks into our border system and enabling checks to take place at e-gates in major ports during Summer 2021. Following the UK exit from the EU and the end of the Transition Period, UK citizens will be subject to additional checks upon entering EU countries. If travelling abroad, you need to take steps to keep safe and prepare in case things change while you are there. Check and subscribe to FCD0 [travel advice](#) updates to understand the latest entry requirements and COVID 19 rules.

[Surge testing to be deployed in Bolton](#)

Press release

Additional surge testing and genomic sequencing deployed in Bolton where a small number of confirmed cases of variants of concern have been identified.



Working in partnership with Bolton Council, NHS Test and Trace is providing additional testing and genomic sequencing in targeted areas within the BL3 postcodes in Bolton. It comes as a small number of cases of the variant first identified in South Africa (B.1.351) and a cluster of cases of the variant first identified in India (B.1.617.2) have been identified.

This follows the classification of the variant first identified in India as a variant of concern by Public Health England, and a public health assessment showing a rise in transmission in parts of Bolton. Confirmed cases have been asked to self-isolate and their contacts have been identified.

Everybody who resides or works in these postcodes is strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 PCR test, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

Enhanced contact tracing will be used for individuals testing positive with a variant of concern. In these instances, contact tracers will look back over an extended period in order to determine the route of transmission.

By using PCR testing, positive results can be sent for genomic sequencing at specialist laboratories, helping us to identify variant of concern cases and their spread.

People with symptoms should book a free test online or by phone so they can get tested at a testing site or have a testing kit sent to them at home. Those without symptoms should visit the [local authority website](#) for more information.

People in this area should also continue using [twice-weekly rapid testing](#) alongside the PCR test as part of surge testing.

PHE health protection teams are working with local authorities, Directors of Public Health (DsPH) and NHS Test and Trace to detect cases and limit onward spread.

[More information about the reclassification of the B.1.617.2 variant](#)

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Two-thirds of UK adults receive first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine

- Two-thirds of UK adults – 35 million – have been vaccinated with a first dose of a COVID-19 jab
- More than 16.7 million people in the UK vaccinated with a second dose of a COVID-19 jab
- Public urged to get the jab when their time comes and do their bit to send the virus into retreat

Two-thirds of UK adults have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Health services across the UK have now administered a total of 51.8 million vaccines between 8 December and 7 May, including 35 million people with their

first dose (66.6%) and 16.7 million with their second (31.8%).

The government met its target of vaccinating the most vulnerable by 15 April, and remains on track to offer a first dose to all adults by the end of July.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This has been a truly national effort, with NHS and care staff and volunteers coming together across the UK to deliver the vaccine at an incredible pace, saving thousands of lives.

One jab at a time, the approved vaccines are helping to send this virus into retreat, with coronavirus cases and deaths now at their lowest levels since the start of the pandemic. I strongly encourage everyone to take up the offer when it comes so we can put this pandemic behind us.

Data from Public Health England's real-world study shows the vaccines are already having a significant impact in the UK, reducing hospitalisations and deaths, saving more than 10,000 lives in England by the end of March.

The latest vaccine effectiveness data from PHE show that in those aged over 70, both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines reduce the risk of getting symptomatic disease by around 60% after a single dose.

This protection lasts for several weeks. In those aged over 80, protection against hospitalisation is around 80% and the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is 85% effective at stopping people aged over 80 dying from COVID-19.

Data from the ONS and Oxford University shows that COVID-19 infections fell significantly, by 65% after the first dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines, rising further after the second dose.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

Two thirds of the adult population have now been vaccinated with one dose in the UK – an incredible achievement.

It is now more important than ever to come forward for the second dose, so we can ensure everyone has the absolute strongest possible protection from this dreadful virus.

I encourage everyone to book their jab as soon as they're offered it, and to come back for their second dose. It's never too late to come forward if you are eligible.

An extra 60 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine have been secured by the UK government to help support preparations for the booster COVID-19 vaccination programme from the autumn if clinically needed.

All vaccines being used in the UK have met the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's strict standards of safety, effectiveness and quality.

Rolling reviews are underway by the MHRA to assess the Janssen and Novavax vaccines.

Approved vaccines are available from thousands of NHS vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England and vaccinations are taking place at sites including mosques, community centres and football stadiums.

- The latest UK-wide vaccination statistics are published [here](#) and NHS England publishes vaccine statistics for England [here](#).
- PHE's real-world data on the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines is available [here](#). Their latest study on household transmission can be found [here](#).
- The ONS survey on 'Barriers to COVID-19 vaccination' can be found [here](#).
- To date, the government has invested over £300 million into manufacturing a successful vaccine to enable a rapid roll out.
- The UK has secured early access to 517 million doses of eight of the most promising vaccine candidates. This includes agreements with:
 - BioNTech/Pfizer for 100 million doses
 - Valneva for 100 million doses
 - Oxford/AstraZeneca who will work to supply 100 million doses of the vaccine being developed by Oxford University
 - GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur to buy 60 million doses
 - Novavax for 60 million doses
 - Janssen for 30 million doses of their not-for-profit vaccine, alongside funding of their Phase 3 clinical trial
 - Moderna for 17 million doses
 - CureVac for 50 million doses
- The UK government is committed to supporting equitable access to vaccines worldwide. The UK is the largest donor to the COVAX facility, the global mechanism to help developing countries access a coronavirus vaccine, and has committed £548 million in UK aid to help distribute 1.3 billion doses of coronavirus vaccines to 92 developing countries this year.

[Christopher Martin reappointed as a Member of the Treasure Valuation](#)

Committee

News story

The Secretary of State has reappointed Christopher Martin as a Member of the Treasure Valuation Committee for a term of five years from 7 February 2021.



An early interest in the Ancient and Medieval World led Chris Martin into the world of numismatics and archaeology, entering the world of collecting at a very young age. Funding his own collection through trading in ancient coins, he founded the company C J Martin (Coins) Ltd in 1971 and has been dealing in the antiquities and numismatic business ever since. He has bought, sold and studied enormous numbers of coins and antiquities enabling him to lead at the forefront of the industry and have a wide knowledge of the market. Currently serving on the Treasure Valuation Committee, as Vice Chairman of the Antiquities Dealers Association (ADA) and Chairman of the British Numismatic Trade Association (BNTA).

His brand "Ancient Art" previously collaborated with Fortnum and Mason, the world renowned luxury department store in Piccadilly, for many years and organized over 15 exhibitions based on the Ancient World. From his businesses and passions, he has helped tens of thousands of people to realise the possibility of owning a piece of the past. He has been proud to nurture many of these first time buyers to become the collectors of the future.

This role is not remunerated. This reappointment has been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). The process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Government's Governance Code requires that any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years is declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Christopher has not declared any political activity.

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