

Welsh Secretary meets apprentices working on ultrafast broadband

Welsh Secretary Robert Buckland has visited Openreach's National Learning Centre for Wales to see training for new recruits bringing ultrafast broadband to Wales.

Based in Newport, the multi-million pound learning centre gives both trainee and existing Openreach engineers the opportunity to learn the ropes and test new skills in a replica street, built from scratch to recreate the real network in the outside world.

Openreach has recruited heavily in recent years as it ramps up its ultrafast Full Fibre build across Wales and the rest of the UK. Its learning centre in Newport plays an integral role in enabling the business to reach its target of reaching 25 million UK homes and businesses by December 2026.

Across Wales there are around 160 Openreach apprentices – of all ages – currently going through their training, with the average age of the trainees being 31. During his tour of the centre, the Secretary of State for Wales met a number of apprentices who have opted to become engineers later in their careers, including Mariaisabel Fernandez from Cardiff.

Mariaisabel recently graduated from her apprenticeship training, having joined Openreach after a number of years working as an Emergency Ambulance Technician for the Welsh Ambulance Service. Wanting a career change that would allow her to work outdoors but also provide a good opportunity to learn and progress, Mariaisabel decided to work with Openreach.

Mariaisabel Fernandez said:

I'd been considering a career change for a while but couldn't quite put my finger on what I wanted to do. I heard through friends that Openreach was a good employer and were looking to recruit more female engineers so I did some research to see the type of work that they did.

The more I looked into it the more I thought that being an Openreach engineer was the right thing for me.

The training that's available in Newport is second-to-none.

Secretary of State for Wales, Sir Robert Buckland said

We all know how important fast reliable broadband connections are.

It's been great to see the investment Openreach is putting into its Full Fibre infrastructure and the training and development of both recruits and existing engineers.

It's also been fantastic to meet new recruits like Mariaisabel and hear about the huge contribution they are making to our economy as they build the ultrafast network that we all need.

Kim Mears, Openreach's Managing Director and Chair of the Openreach Wales Board, said

Our National Learning Centre for Wales is testimony to our commitment to not only continued learning and development but also to Wales.

The vast majority of new recruits come here to Newport to get their training before going out into the real world and helping us to build our Full Fibre infrastructure at speed across Wales.

[Joint outcome statement: India-UK round five FTA negotiations](#)

News story

Round five of negotiations for a free trade agreement between the Republic of India and the United Kingdom



On 29 July 2022, the Republic of India and the United Kingdom concluded the fifth round of talks for an India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Negotiation officials undertook these technical talks in a hybrid fashion – with some of the teams meeting in New Delhi, India, and the majority of

officials joining virtually.

For this round of negotiations, technical experts from both sides came together for detailed draft treaty text discussions in 85 separate sessions covering 15 policy areas.

Indian and UK officials will continue to work intensively throughout the summer towards our target to conclude the majority of talks on a comprehensive and balanced Free Trade Agreement by the end of October 2022.

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Ukraine: G7 Foreign Ministers' statement on Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant

We, the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and the High Representative of the European Union, re-reiterate our strongest condemnation of the ongoing unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The Russian Federation must immediately withdraw its troops from within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders and respect Ukraine's territory and sovereignty.

In that context, we demand that Russia immediately hand back full control to its rightful sovereign owner, Ukraine, of the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant as well as of all nuclear facilities within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders to ensure their safe and secure operations. Ukrainian staff operating the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant must be able to carry out their duties without threats or pressure. It is Russia's continued occupation control of the plant that endangers the region.

We remain profoundly concerned by the serious threat that the occupation seizure of Ukrainian nuclear facilities and other actions by Russian armed forces pose to the safety and security of these facilities, significantly raising the risk of a nuclear accident or incident and endangering the population of Ukraine, neighboring states and the international community. They It also undermines the IAEA's ability to monitor Ukraine's peaceful nuclear activities for safeguarding purposes.

We welcome and support IAEA Director General Grossi's efforts to strengthen nuclear safety and security in Ukraine and we thank the Director General and the IAEA staff for their steadfast commitment in this regard. Against this background, we underline the importance of facilitating a mission of IAEA

experts to the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant to address nuclear safety, security and safeguard concerns, in a manner that while respecting full Ukrainian sovereignty over its territory and infrastructure. We strongly endorse the importance of the Seven Pillars of Nuclear Safety and Security as outlined by Director General Grossi.

We reiterate our full and continued support for the IAEA. IAEA staff must be able to access all nuclear facilities in Ukraine safely and without impediment, and engage directly, and without interference, with the Ukrainian personnel responsible for the operation of these facilities. The safety of all individuals implementing these efforts must be addressed to strengthen nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine.

We encourage all countries to support the IAEA's efforts.

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office summons Chinese Ambassador, Zheng Zeguang over Beijing's Aggressive escalation against Taiwan

Press release

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office has today summoned the Chinese Ambassador.



The Foreign Secretary instructed Sir Tim Barrow, Second Permanent Under-Secretary for the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office to summon the Ambassador to China, Zheng Zeguang. He was summoned over Beijing's aggressive and wide-ranging escalation against Taiwan over the last week in response to Speaker Pelosi's visit on 2 August.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

The UK and partners have condemned in the strongest terms China's escalation in the region around Taiwan, as seen through our recent G7 statement.

I instructed officials to summon the Chinese Ambassador to explain his country's actions. We have seen increasingly aggressive behaviour and rhetoric from Beijing in recent months, which threaten peace and stability in the region. The United Kingdom urges China to resolve any differences by peaceful means, without the threat or use of force or coercion.

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Vice Admiral Sir Chris Gardner KBE appointed as new SDA Chief Executive Officer

Vice Admiral Sir Chris Gardner KBE will replace Ian Booth, whose five-year appointment as CEO of the SDA comes to an end on 3 September 2022.

The SDA is an executive agency of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and was established in April 2018 to manage the procurement, in-service support, and disposal of UK nuclear submarines.

Vice Admiral Sir Chris will take on this vital role within defence and ensure the SDA continues to provide support to the Defence Nuclear Enterprise and Continuous At Sea Deterrent by safely delivering available, capable and reliable in-service submarines and systems.

On behalf of Director General Nuclear and the First Sea Lord, the SDA CEO will lead the day-to-day support and maintenance operations of Trafalgar, Astute and Vanguard Class submarines; and lead the design and construction of all new UK submarines including the Astute Class, the Dreadnought Class and the development of the next generation attack submarine concept.

Incoming CEO of the SDA Vice Admiral Sir Chris Gardner KBE said:

I am delighted and honoured to have been appointed as the new CEO of the SDA. I am looking forward to working with my new team on this area of vital Defence interest and continuing to deliver for the Royal Navy. Best of all, I am really looking forward to returning to my submarine roots.

Vice Admiral Sir Chris started his career as a Royal Navy Logistics Officer, before taking on various roles, including the Military Assistant to Director General Fleet Support and the Commander Logistics on HMS ARK ROYAL.

After reaching the rank of Commodore, he became the Head of Capability Improvement in the MOD and was promoted to Vice Admiral in 2019 where he was appointed as Defence Equipment and Support's Royal Navy lead for the acquisition and in-service support of the surface fleet.

Director General Defence Nuclear Vanessa Nicholls said:

I am delighted to welcome Vice Admiral Sir Chris Gardner KBE to the Defence Nuclear Enterprise as the new CEO of the SDA. He brings a wealth of operational experience to the role at a pivotal time for the UK Submarine Programme. I look forward to working with him.

Competition for Vice Admiral Sir Chris' position was held earlier in the year. As with all senior Civil Service appointments, fair and open competition was ensured, with recruitment of the role being overseen by the Civil Service Commissioner.