

News story: Brexit Minister visits university and businesses in Northern Ireland

Minister Robin Walker has heard directly from people, groups and businesses in Northern Ireland about the opportunities and challenges of Brexit, as part of the Government's ongoing commitment to work with all parts of the UK on our withdrawal.

Visiting alongside Northern Ireland Minister Chloe Smith, Robin Walker met representatives from a number of key sectors, including higher education and business. The trip took in Ulster University's Belfast campus, recycling and waste management company Re-Gen Waste in Newry, a visit to the border, and the CBI's under-35s forum for promising future business leaders.

The Minister also saw the regeneration of Belfast Harbour and heard how Belfast is becoming a major hub for inward investment. It is the world's number one international investment location for financial services technology and cyber security firms, and has seen 1,200 new cyber security related jobs created over the past five years.

The Minister used the visit to hear first hand about the opportunities and challenges that the UK's exit from the EU could present to Northern Ireland, and to reiterate the Government's commitment to ensuring the specific interests of Northern Ireland are a priority in the talks. The visit is part of a wider programme of engagement with all parts of the UK on Brexit, and builds on previous visits to Northern Ireland by Minister Robin Walker and Secretary of State David Davis to discuss our EU withdrawal.

The Government has published a comprehensive paper which outlines the UK's position on addressing the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland and the land border with Ireland. It makes clear the Government's commitment to avoiding any physical infrastructure at the border.

Minister for Exiting the EU, Robin Walker said:

As we look to leave the EU, we've been absolutely clear that we want to hear from people and businesses across all parts of the UK about the specific opportunities and challenges Brexit represents to them.

Because of its land border and shared history with Ireland, Northern Ireland of course has unique issues relating to Brexit that we've committed to address as a priority. That's why we've set out our proposals to ensure we protect the Belfast Agreement in the negotiations, and ensure the land border is as seamless and frictionless as possible for people and businesses.

I've had the chance to speak with a wide range of groups during this trip – and it's an opportunity that's proved invaluable. I had the pleasure of meeting with some of Belfast's brightest young business leaders, who demonstrated to me the breadth of talent and opportunity the City has to offer. It is clear that Belfast is putting itself on the map as a hub for innovation and foreign direct investment. We want to ensure this trend continues – delivering EU exit in a way that works for all parts of the UK.

Northern Ireland Minister Chloe Smith said:

The UK Government is completely committed to finding a practical solution for the movement of people and goods across the border, as we recognise the unique economic, historical and geographical circumstances between Northern Ireland and Ireland. We are clear we do not want any obstacles between the UK and our closest trading partner, Ireland.

The Government is working for a successful outcome that brings more economic opportunities for the future of everyone in Northern Ireland and preserves stability in Northern Ireland.

[News story: Lord Duncan visits Lewis and Harris](#)

The Minister's visit to Lewis and Harris concludes a summer of engagement by Lord Duncan across Scotland, including visits to the Shetland Isles, Aberdeen, Inverness, Elgin, St. Andrews, Glasgow, Perth and Paisley.

The visit also follows Scottish Secretary David Mundell's recent visit to Skye, as the UK Government ensures it is listening to the priorities of Scottish businesses as we prepare to leave the EU.

Lord Duncan met with representatives from the Na h-Eileanan Siar and MG Alba, as well as visiting the Harris Tweed Shawbost Mill and Isle of Harris Distillers, to see the trading opportunities for two global brands, home and abroad.

Touring the Isle of Harris Distillery

Speaking after his visit, Lord Duncan said:

It is good to be back on the islands. I spent many summers on

Donald MacInnes' converted fishing boat touring from Lewis to Barra. Much has changed since then. Back then the Harris Distillery was just a plot of land!

The purpose of the visit – aside from enjoying the traditional islands hospitality – was to listen to the voices from the islands to ensure that it is heard and heeded as the Brexit negotiations unfold.

This trip has been a fantastic opportunity to speak with key sectors and individuals, listening to how we can ensure Brexit offers a bright future for our traditional industries.

Brexit is about strengthening devolution and bringing decision-making powers to Scotland. It is essential that Na h-Eileanan Siar stands ready to seize the opportunity.

[News story: DASA showcases innovation at DSEI 2017](#)

DSEI (Defence and Security Equipment International) 2017 was held in London from 12 to 15 September. The industry defence and security exhibition attracted more than 35,000 visitors, providing DASA a great opportunity to network with existing and potential partners and to showcase how we find, fund and exploit innovations for benefit and support of UK defence and security.

We were delighted to showcase and demonstrate products from Oxbotica, Close Air Solutions, Folium Optics and Glyndwr Innovations on the stand throughout the week.

Innovation networking

On Tuesday 12 September, we held a seminar followed by an Innovation Network Event at the Innovation Hub. At our seminar, Lucy Mason, Head of the Defence and Security Accelerator gave an update on DASA activities. She also announced changes to our [Open Call for Innovation](#) competition. The [one page pitch pilot](#) is already proving popular and has received several entries.

[Finding, funding and exploiting innovation for UK Defence and Security presentation](#)

Jim Pennycook, Innovation Partner then explained what funding and support opportunities DASA can offer industry and academic innovators if their product or service could meet one of the defence and security challenges.

[Challenges and opportunities with the Defence and Security Accelerator](#)

[Close Air Solutions](#) and [Oxbotica](#), organisations who have received funding from DASA, explained how DASA had helped them develop their product so it was fit for the defence and/or security market.

Innovation into exploitation

Lucy Mason also took part in a panel discussion on 'Innovation to Exploitation' with the [UK Defence Solutions Centre](#) (UKDSC).

Last mile winners announced

The Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin MP, also [announced the winners to our Autonomous Last Mile competition](#). This development will shape and transform the way the British Army supplies front line troops in the future.

[Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Macedonia](#)

2015 – present Chair Mashrek Maghreb Working Group, European External Action Service 2012 – 2015 Head Neighbourhoods Team, UK Permanent Representation to the EU (UKREP), Brussels 2008 – 2011 FCO, Deputy Head International Organisations Department 2007 – 2008 FCO/Department for International Development, Head of Darfur Section, Sudan Unit 2006 Her Majesty's Treasury, Counter-Terrorism Review Team 2006 Helmand, FCO Representative, Lashkar Gar Provincial Reconstruction Team 2003 – 2006 Washington, Second Secretary (Political) 2002 – 2003 FCO, Jamaica and Cuba Desk Officer 2001 – 2002 Parliamentary Researcher

[Speech: Defence Secretary Michael Fallon at Faslane](#)

It is a huge pleasure to welcome Permanent and Military Representatives of NATO to Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde.

Our nation's commitment to the Alliance – the bedrock of our defence – remains absolute.

In the past year alone we've increased our NATO efforts: policing Black Sea

skies, leading half of its maritime missions and upping our efforts to mentor Afghan officers. And today, our Prime Minister is in Estonia visiting the 800 UK troops who, supported by our French and Danish allies, are leading NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence providing vital reassurance to our Eastern European allies.

But there's no greater illustration of our commitment to NATO which, after all, remains a nuclear alliance than our investment in the UK's independent nuclear deterrent submarine force. And today, we mark the milestone of its 350th patrol at its home base.

So, before I continue, I would like to thank our brave submariners and our submarine enterprise as a whole. For almost 50 years their efforts and those of their forebears have kept us safe every hour of every day. They remain the ultimate guarantors of our security.

And this event offers us a unique opportunity to remind ourselves why our nuclear programme remains so significant.

Protect Our People

First, it's about protecting our people. Our nuclear deterrent remains our only defence against the most extreme threats to our way of life.

Those threats are intensifying whether they come from North Korea's latest nuclear testing setting off a hydrogen bomb, launching ballistic missiles and reinforcing her reckless defiance of the international community. Or Russia, which not content with aggression in Ukraine and Crimea, has over the last few years repeatedly ramped up its nuclear rhetoric and in its latest exercise involving some 50,000 troops massed on the borders of Eastern Europe will also test nuclear capable ballistic missiles.

Now the UK remains firmly committed to the long term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. As Secretary of State, I reduced the number of deployed warheads on each submarine from 48 to 40 and the number of operationally available warheads to no more than 120. Just as we remain committed to reducing our overall stockpile of nuclear warheads to no more than 180 by the mid-2020s.

Yet, at the same time, we remain realistic. The total number of nuclear weapons in the world did not suddenly fall. Much as we would love to live in a world without nuclear weapons. We cannot uninvent them.

Our deterrent ensures our adversaries are left in no doubt that the benefits of any attack will be vastly outweighed by the consequences.

No credible alternative exists. And we see no reason to change our posture.

Protect Our Alliance But this brings me back to the point at which I started. Our nuclear deterrent isn't just essential for our security. it's essential for NATO's security as well. It forms one of the Alliance's key centres of decision making that complicates the calculations of our adversaries.

What is more, many nations, represented here today signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in the late 1960s, safe in the knowledge they were covered by NATO's nuclear umbrella including the United Kingdom deterrent. Not only did that deal help halt the nuclear arms race at the time, it has helped to cut the world's nuclear stockpile by 85%.

It is no coincidence there hasn't been a major conflict involving nuclear powered states since the end of the Second World War.

Protect Our Future

Finally, our independent deterrent is a promise to protect our future. We don't know what threats lie around the corner.

Yet by giving the next generation every means necessary – from the conventional though to the nuclear – to deal with whatever comes round the corner.

We are strengthening their hand ensuring that they will have the means to deter potential threats into the 2040s, 2050s, 2060s and beyond.

That is why today we're building four Dreadnought class submarines which will enter service in the early 2030's.

That is why we're continuing to spend £1.3Bn over the next three years on facilities here at Faslane. And that is why we are building on the incredible advanced manufacturing skills found across Scotland to transform this base into a Royal Navy submarine centre of specialisation a base for all UK submarines providing 6,800 jobs now and 8,200 in the future.

Conclusion

So I hope you find your visit instructive and informative.

You can rely on the UK to remain not just 100 per cent committed to our NATO alliance but 100 per cent committed to our deterrent – a message Parliament confirmed overwhelmingly last year when it voted to maintain CASD. At the same time, we can never be complacent.

As we look towards next year's NATO summit and beyond we must not just ensure the Alliance's political and military leaders continue recognising the importance of nuclear capabilities as NATO adapts and modernise but continues to make the case about the importance of nuclear weapons to a new generation.

Our national safety the strength of our Alliance and the security of the world depends on it.