UK to host world-leading Nato Defence Innovation Headquarters

The United Kingdom, in partnership with Estonia, will host the European HQ of a programme for NATO allies to accelerate, test, evaluate and validate new technologies that address critical defence challenges and contribute to Alliance deterrence.

Announced today by the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) will see transatlantic cooperation on critical technologies and help NATO work more closely with industry and academia.

The UK's accelerator will be twinned with a new accelerator in Talinn, Estonia to encourage the sharing of expertise, explore the use of virtual sites to trial vehicles, including autonomous ones, and test cyber innovations.

As hosts, the UK and Estonia will:

- Support start-up companies with funding, guidance and business expertise through twinned accelerator networks.
- Offer the use of 'deep tech' test centres to assess technological solutions to military problems, utilising the Defence BattleLab.
- Work with NATO to develop a virtual marketplace to connect start-ups with trusted investors, as well as a rapid acquisition service to connect products to buyers at pace.

UK Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace said:

> The UK and Estonia are two of the most innovative countries in NATO and our hosting of DIANA will harness that innovation for the benefit of all Allies tackling future military threats.
>
> The UK has a vibrant tech community, combining the academia, financiers, and high-tech start-ups that make it an ideal place to develop the next generation of military technologies.
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> Estonia was the natural partner for the UK given its international leadership in cyber, autonomy and AI, and our close partnership forged through the Enhanced Forward Presence.

Ranked in the world's top ten innovative universities, Imperial College

London will bring together academia, industry and government by hosting the headquarters of DIANA and a DIANA Accelerator at the Innovation Hub (IHUB) in the White City Innovation District, in a space shared with the UK's Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA), Major Defence Contractors and The US Directors of Defence's Tri-Service Office.

Supported by DASA, the UK and Estonia DIANA HQ is expected to be operational from July 2022. DIANA is essential to delivering the NATO 2030 vision and ensuring that the Alliance develops the military capabilities needed to deter and defend against existing and future threats.

Estonian Defence Minister, Kalle Laanet.

> The goal of DIANA is to support deep technologies companies that contribute to defence. It will bring together talented innovators with new technologies end-users in the area of defence. We are very glad to see that the good cooperation we have with the UK will expand even further and also encompass our universities and private sector more,
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> Cooperation between the UK and Estonia is working well on every level because we have a common understanding of defence policy. Good relations with Allies is a cornerstone of Estonian defence policy, and a successful start to this programme for us is a sign that this cornerstone is strong.

Co- Director, Institute for Security Science and Technology, Imperial College London, Professor Deeph Chana, said:

> As one of the top STEM-B universities in the world, in one of the most diverse cities, Imperial College London is uniquely placed to power a progressive, responsible and holistic dual-use security and defence technology innovation program by hosting DIANA. Coordinated through our Institute for Security Science and Technology and Business School we're committed to working on disruptive research and innovation to reduce insecurity and to deal with global threats and challenges.

DIANA will support all seven of the key emerging and disruptive technologies that NATO has identified as priorities: artificial intelligence, big-data processing, quantum-enabled technologies, autonomy, biotechnology, hypersonics and space.

Rivercraft: Minecraft game inspires young environmental champions

Children and young people across the world can learn more about climate change, the environment, and reducing the impacts of flooding thanks to a new Minecraft: Education Edition game, 'Rivercraft'.

Based on the £54.7million flood risk management scheme in Preston and South Ribble, the in-game Preston world is the first activity of its kind that uses Artificial Intelligence to map a region and convert it into an interactive Minecraft map. The games will be available globally and in multiple languages to be used in educational and home environments across the world within Minecraft: Education Edition. This established educational tool is used by millions of educators and students in 112 countries, with hundreds of free lessons and curriculum, teacher trainings, and learning programs.

The Environment Agency and Microsoft will work alongside experts in youth engagement, BlockBuilders to draw users into three themed games. The Preston world will encourage young people to learn about flood risk management, climate change, local human geography, engineering and the environment.

- Game 1 – Managing Flooding. This game will focus on building the Preston and South Ribble flood defences. The player will be tasked with constructing various types of flood prevention measures including natural flood management, walls and embankments as well as flood storage areas and flood gates. Players will learn about the pros and cons of each approach and their suitability within local communities
- Game 2 – Flood Prevention. This game will explore how individual actions can alleviate climate change and how understanding flood risk can reduce the damage to people and property.
- Game 3 – Our Local Environment. This game will begin on the riverbank where the player will be tasked with conducting an ecological survey using their digital workbook and camera. The aim of this game will be for the surveyors to spot and record some of our most beloved wildlife species including water voles and otters.

With a drive to encourage young people into environment based careers, the characters in the game have also been adapted to reflect the diversity of the local project team and the communities the Environment Agency serves.

Andy Brown, Flood Risk Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

> This is an amazing opportunity for students and a project we are proud to be a part of. Not only will young people learn about a major flooding scheme in the UK, but they will also discover more about climate change, the environment, flooding and the types of roles available for careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

> Introducing the next generation to the brilliant career opportunities we have here at the Environment Agency is key if we are to deliver our vital flood and coastal defence projects. This includes the Preston and South Ribble Scheme, which will directly reduce flood risk to 4,700 homes and businesses.
>
> We want to help everyone discover their drive, passion and enthusiasm for the environment and the jobs available within that sector. We can't wait to see Rivercraft and the Preston world brought to life across the globe.

Justin Edwards, Director of Learning Programmes, Minecraft, said:

> We know that people around the world love Minecraft, and so it is really rewarding for us to see Minecraft encouraging students to talk about and engage with environmental issues.
>
> The game provides an opportunity not just to get to know the flooding scheme in Preston and South Ribble, but also understand real world impact in a safe and fun way. The game also shows how communities are impacted, not just individuals. We're committed to making a better world through the power of play and this project is at the forefront of that vision.

You can read more about Rivercraft.

Notes to editors

- Rivercraft is a world developed by the EA in Minecraft Education Edition and is based on the Environment Agency £54.7million flood risk management scheme in Preston and South Ribble.
- This scheme started construction in October 2021 and will directly reduce flood risk to 4,700 homes and businesses from Preston Riversway up towards the M6 and Higher Walton.
- The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is contributing £6.525M towards the scheme and funding has been secured from multiple sources including the Department for Education.
- Construction of the scheme will be completed by summer 2023 and in line with ERDF timescales.
- Work also continues on the design of the defences for the later stages of the scheme in Walton-le-Dale, Frenchwood and Higher Walton.
- The scheme will deliver, improved access to the River Ribble including for emergency access on Strand Road through the remediation of the old slipway to the river.
- The scheme will also create additional environmental improvements including habitat creation in the Ribble Sidings area (during 2023). Revetment work to stabilise the river banks will also create additional bank habitat and wider footpaths in some of the more narrow areas around the entrance to Miller Park and along Riverside Road.
- Four new sports pitches will also be created as a permanent scheme

legacy
- All scheme information can be viewed at www.thefloodhub.co.uk

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Severn flood defences undergoing thorough checks

- Essential work happening to maintain defences in top condition
- Thousands of properties protected from devastating impact of flood defences during storms

The Environment Agency is carrying out inspections and maintenance to flood defences along the River Severn following the February storms when the defences were in operation providing benefit to thousands of homes and businesses.

Storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin hit the UK in February, seeing the Met Office issue 2 rare red warnings for Eunice which was the most severe and damaging storm to affect England and Wales for many years.

A forecast tidal surge on the Severn Estuary threatened flooding to thousands. This was followed by heavy rainfall in the Welsh Mountains which saw the River Severn rise to extremely high levels in its upper reaches resulting in flooding of some properties in the area.

Rhys McCarthy, Flood Risk Manager for the Environment Agency said:

> February brought 3 named storms in succession which posed a significant risk of flooding to communities along the River Severn. We were however prepared, with thousands of properties benefiting from the protection that our defences provided. These defences included flood walls and embankments, flood storage areas, temporary barriers, property flood resilience measures, pumps and flood gates.
>
> We are now inspecting all of our flood defences to work out where any essential repair works are needed to make sure they are all in good working order and fully operational, ready to use again. This work includes removing any blockages in rivers and culverts, clearing debris from trash screens and checking the operation of sluices. Demountable and temporary defences and pumps have already been cleaned and checked for damage.

The Environment Agency issued 12 severe flood warnings and a total of 118 flood alerts and warnings during the storms and deployed all of its flood assets along the Rivers Severn and Wye, including temporary and demountable

barriers at Shrewsbury, Ironbridge, Hereford and Bewdley.

Flooding can have a devastating impact, which is why protecting people and communities is the Environment Agency's top priority. It is clear that we are already seeing the impacts of climate change in the UK and around the world, which is why urgent action is needed to adapt the impacts of climate emergency at the same time as reducing emissions.

Community teams from the Environment Agency, Worcestershire County Council, Shropshire Council, the National Flood Forum, Severn Trent Water and district councils have also been out speaking to communities throughout Worcestershire and Shropshire.

Anyone can sign up for free flood warnings and take action to make sure they know what to do in case of flooding.

You can check your flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date with the latest situation at GOV.UK, call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or follow @EnvAgency on Twitter for the latest flood updates.

- Over a 9 day period from 12 to 20 February 2022, more than 100 millimetres of rain fell widely across upland areas, and 200 millimetres across parts of Wales. Much of Wales and northern England received the whole-month February 1991-2022 average rainfall, with some locations more than 150% of average.
- Flooding to property can occur directly and indirectly from the River Severn. Indirect flooding can occur due to rising groundwater with cellars filling with water, and from surface water and sewers when the rise in river level means the sewers cannot discharge to the River Severn.
- As part of our management of flood risk on the River Severn we consider a range of options in terms of actions to reduce flood risk and increase flood resilience, this includes construction of flood protection schemes such as those in Bewdley and Upton-Upon-Severn, enhanced maintenance of the River Severn clearing blockages and removing debris, tree work, weed cutting, maintenance of earth embankments, preventing in appropriate development in the floodplain. When considering options for reducing flood risk we have to look at a number of factors such as overall benefit, cost and impact on the environment.

Little Crow Solar Park development consent decision announced

The Little Crow Solar Park application was for an Energy scheme comprising ground mounted solar photovoltaic arrays, electrical storage, grid connection infrastructure and other infrastructure integral to its construction,

operation, maintenance and decommissioning. The solar park will have an intended design capacity of over 50MWp (megawatts peak).

The application was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration by INRG SOLAR (Little Crow) Ltd on 04 December 2020 and accepted for Examination on 23 December 2020.

Following Examinations during which the public, Statutory Consultees and Interested Parties were given the opportunity to give evidence to the Examining Authority, recommendations were made to the Secretary of State on 05 January 2022.

This is the 109th Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and 68th energy application to have been examined by The Planning Inspectorate within the timescales laid down in the Planning Act 2008.

The Planning Inspectorate's Chief Executive, Sarah Richards said:

"The Planning Inspectorate has now examined more than 100 nationally significant infrastructure projects since the Planning Act 2008 process was introduced, ensuring local communities have had the opportunity of being involved in the examination of projects that may affect them.

"This Examination took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions, and the Examining Authority worked hard to ensure that local people, the local authority and other Interested Parties were able to fully participate.

"The Examining Authority listened and gave full consideration to local views and the evidence gathered during the examination before making their recommendation."

The decision, the recommendation made by the Examining Authority to the Secretary of State and the evidence considered by the Examining Authority in reaching its recommendation are publicly available on the project pages of the National Infrastructure Planning website.

ENDS

Journalists wanting further information should contact the Planning Inspectorate Press Office, on 0303 444 5004 or 0303 444 5005 or email: <Press.office@planninginspectorate.gov.uk >

Notes to editors:

The Planning Inspectorate's National Infrastructure Programme of Projects details the proposals which are anticipated to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as applications in the coming months.

TRA to review trade remedy measures on Hot Rolled Flat and Coil steel

Press release

The Trade Remedies Authority has begun transition reviews into anti-dumping and countervailing measures on Hot Rolled Flat and Coil steel from China.

The Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) has today (Tuesday 5 April) initiated transition reviews into anti-dumping and countervailing measures on imports of Hot Rolled Flat and Coil steel from China to decide whether the duties are still needed.

These measures are among those that the UK inherited from the EU system – the TRA is reviewing them to make sure they are still suitable for the UK's needs.

The measures cover Hot Rolled Flat and Coil steel products often used in the construction and automotive industries among others. The period of investigation for the transition reviews is 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022, while the injury period is 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2022. View further information on the TRA's current transition reviews, including the notice of initiation for this review.

Businesses that may be affected by the investigation (such as importers or exporters of the products or UK producers of similar products) can contribute to the investigation by registering on the TRA's online case platform. They can also stay up to date with developments in the case, which will be posted on the TRA's public file.

Note to editors

- Anti-dumping duties allow a country or union to take action against goods which are being sold at less than their normal value – this is defined as the price for 'like goods' sold in the exporter's home market.

- Countervailing measures are put in place to counter imports being sold at unfair prices due to government subsidies in their country of origin.

- These measures are two of the three types of trade remedies – along with safeguard measures which address sudden, unforeseen floods of imports – that are allowed under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.

- Trade remedies are usually applied at the border as a duty on imports.

- The TRA is the UK body that investigates whether trade remedy measures are needed to counter unfair import practices and unforeseen surges of imports.

- Trade remedy investigations were carried out by the EU Commission on the UK's behalf until the UK left the EU. Forty-four EU trade remedy measures of interest to UK producers were carried across into UK law when the UK left the EU and the TRA is currently reviewing each one to check if it is suitable for UK needs.

- Period of Investigation – when we are investigating dumping and subsidy cases, we will use a period of investigation of around a year. We will aim for the end point to be as close as possible to the date of initiation. However, we will decide this on a case-by-case basis.

- Period of injury – the injury period will usually cover the period of investigation and normally the 36 months immediately before this (i.e. 48 months in total). TRA investigators look at evidence of injury over a longer period than the general period of investigation so that they can assess trends and other factors in more detail than if they looked at a single year.

Published 5 April 2022