

News story: F-35 jets use new vertical landing pads at RAF Marham for the first time

To support the aircraft's short take off vertical landing (STOVL) capability, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation is building three VLPs through its contractors, a joint venture between Galliford Try and Lagan Construction, at RAF Marham. The Norfolk site is the Main Operating Base for the F-35 in the UK.

The F-35's STOVL capability will provide operational flexibility including landing on the Royal Navy's new Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers. Initial flight trials of the F-35 Lightning aircraft from HMS Queen Elizabeth are on track for 2018, allowing a coherent build-up towards delivering a carrier strike capability for the UK from 2020.

Construction presented a significant engineering challenge. Due to standard concrete not being suitable, the design team had to source special materials from Germany to make a concrete which has the ability to withstand the high temperatures created by aircraft engines. Without this there would be a risk of cracking which in turn could present significant risk to the aircraft. This was the first time this material has been used outside the USA and required a rigorous testing process to ensure the landing pads were fit for purpose.

Lt Col Ian Jenkins, Defence Infrastructure Organisation Project Manager for the VLPs, said:

Vertical landing is a really exciting military capability and from an infrastructure perspective it's been fascinating to be involved in the design and construction process. It was really exciting and rewarding to see an F-35 landing on the first vertical landing pad to be finished and I look forward to seeing more as we continue to work on other infrastructure upgrades required for the F-35s.

Each landing pad measures 67m long and 67m wide, with a central landing area of 30.5m by 30.5m.

Four F-35B Lightning aircraft arrived at their new home at RAF Marham on 6 June this year, starting the build-up of the newly-reformed 617 Squadron in the UK. The successful first use of these new VLPs is another step closer towards successfully reaching Initial Operating Capability for the UK by the end of the year.

In addition to its short take off and vertical landing capability, the F-35B's unique combination of stealth, cutting-edge radar, sensor technology, and electronic warfare systems bring all of capabilities of a fifth-

generation fighter.

[News story: Worthy Down camp takes shape as first phase of construction completes](#)

A flagship college, recreational space and high-quality accommodation are all part of the completed first phase of works, part of the transformation of this tri-services amenity.

The new facilities at Worthy Down provide a single location for training and operations, to meet the combined needs of Princess Royal Barracks, HMS Raleigh and RAF Halton.

To date, over 36,500sqm of floor space has been built, creating new surroundings where RAF, Royal Navy and Army personnel can live, work and train.

Using almost 1 million bricks in the process, the Skanska team and DIO have provided the Defence College of Logistics, Policing and Administration with a 154-seat lecture theatre, 60 brand new homes for military people and their families, 755 single-bed spaces in six new blocks and a 358 seat canteen.

The site's new, larger water tank holds 324,000 litres, almost half the capacity of an Olympic-sized pool.

More than 15,000m of pipes and cables, almost twice the height of Mount Everest, have been installed underground on site to accommodate current and future power, water and drainage needs. New energy-efficient boilers for the camp will also produce enough heat to meet all current and potential future requirements.



The Catering, Retail and Leisure facility is the social hub for permanent staff and visitors. Photo courtesy of Skanska UK.

Matthew Richardson, DIO Principal Project Manager, said:

DIO supports service personnel by providing and improving single living and service family accommodation so we're pleased to be working with Skanska to deliver these facilities. Once the new facilities are complete it will enable the MOD to train personnel more efficiently and effectively so that they can provide the best possible support for military operations.

Lt. Col. Ian Bruce, who is responsible for military activities at Worthy Down said:

The facilities provided to date are very good. There is a lot of excitement around the camp regarding the college, recreational space and accommodation and I look forward to welcoming future military personnel to the camp.

Paul Weale, Skanska's project director, said:

This flagship project is helping the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to provide its people with great places to live and learn. We're also

making a positive contribution to the local community by engaging with schools and community groups. To date, we have worked with over 1,600 young people and we have arranged a number of student visits to the site.

The team delivering Worthy Down camp has also scooped three consecutive national gold awards from the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS), which aims to improve the image of construction.



One of the SLA blocks on the site at Worthy Down. Photo courtesy of Skanska UK.

Building Worthy Down is one part of a two-part scheme for the DIO called Project Wellesley. The second is the development of a new community called Mindenhurst, in Deepcut, Surrey, where the MOD is vacating Princess Royal Barracks. Combined, the two parts will help the MOD to rationalise its estate and improve its training provision and living quarters.

[News story: Joint UK-Qatari Typhoon](#)

squadron stands up as defence relationship deepens

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson hosted the Amir Of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani at the standing up ceremony of the UK-Qatar Joint Typhoon Squadron today (24th July).

The event, held at Horse Guards, marked an important milestone in the two countries' defence relationship and included defence talks to further strengthen the close partnership between the UK and Qatar.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Qatar remains a close and important friend to the UK and it is the only nation with which we have a joint squadron. This requires a level of trust, born from our long-shared history and our commitment to a shared future.

Our formidable Typhoon jets will boost the Qatari military's mission to tackle challenges in the Middle East, supporting stability in the region and delivering security at home.

As part of the multi-billion-pound contract to supply Qatar with 24 Typhoon aircraft 9 Hawk T2 aircraft, No.12 Squadron will integrate Qatari personnel, including pilots and ground-crew, from 2019. The personnel will be initially stationed at RAF Coningsby, and then in Qatar, undertaking a package of training and co-operation with their UK counterparts. It represents a unique initiative, and not since the Second World War and the Battle of Britain has the RAF formed a squadron with another nation.

The Joint Squadron will provide the Qatari Amiri Air Force (QAAF) with valuable experience operating the aircraft and speed up their preparation for when the first QAAF Typhoon are delivered in 2022.

At the ceremony at Horse Guards, the Amir also received his Sandhurst Medal, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of his graduation from the Academy. The ceremony celebrated the historic and enduring links between UK and Qatari defence training academies.

The two countries share mutual interests in countering violent extremism, and ensuring stability in the region, and this formation will further reinforce those ties by helping to prevent terrorism from spreading and protecting the prosperity and security of the UK at home.

[News story: Defence Minister outlines progress on building a Better Defence Estate](#)

In a statement to MPs, Mr Ellwood confirmed that the MOD has already disposed of nine sites and has advanced its plans for the release of other sites which have been identified for sale.

The changes under the Better Defence Estates Strategy, announced in 2016, are the most significant since the end of the Second World War and will see the sale of 91 sites owned or managed by the MOD.

The site sales will release land no longer required by the military, which will be able to be used for more economically beneficial purposes, such as house building.

The plans will save the taxpayer around £140 million by the end of the decade, rising to £3 billion by the end of 2040. The changes will also reduce the number of personnel being regularly moved between different bases, providing greater long-term stability and certainty for our Armed Forces and their families.

All money raised will be reinvested back into defence, with £4 billion committed to improving military bases, including accommodation.

Mr Ellwood also announced that the RAF will stop using RAF Linton-on-Ouse in North Yorkshire by 2020 and RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire by 2022.

RAF Scampton is the current home of the Red Arrows and work is underway to find them a new home fit for purpose. The MOD will work closely with the local council and potential buyers to ensure the site's future use meets the needs of the local economy, whilst also exploring ways in which the heritage of the site, including a museum, can be preserved.

Despite RAF Scampton's closure, the RAF presence in Lincolnshire continues to grow. There will be significant investment in the Lincolnshire area, with several hundred service personnel arriving at RAF Cranwell, RAF Waddington and RAF Coningsby over the next five years.

RAF Linton-on-Ouse, the main base for the No.1 Flying Training School, will cease being an RAF Station in 2020 and the MOD is currently considering other potential defence uses, ahead of an eventual disposal of the site.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

Our military bases are where our service personnel live, train and work, so it's important that we have sites which suit the needs of the armed forces.

That's why we're making our defence estate more modern and efficient, by closing sites we don't need and investing in more modern accommodation. As well as saving money, and allowing reinvestment back into a more modern and better defence estate, the changes will provide greater long-term stability and certainty for our Armed Forces and their families.

Key facts

- The Better Defence Estates strategy is part of the Defence Estate Optimisation Programme, which will reduce the size of the built estate by 30 per cent by 2040 and will meet our SDSR commitment. See the strategy [here](#)

The programme has already delivered nine disposals at:

- Hullavington Airfield
- Chalgrove Airfield
- Somerset Barracks
- MOD facilities at Swansea Airport
- Moat House
- Rylston Road ARC (London)
- Newtonards Airfield
- Copthorne Barracks

- Lodge Hill

- The plans will deliver savings of over £140 million of running costs over the next 10 years, rising to nearly £3 billion by 2040. This is in addition to the £4 billion which will be spent over the next 10 years.

- As at 1 April 2016, the MOD currently controls around 2% of UK land, owning more than 568,000 acres of land and foreshore in the UK (either freehold or leasehold) and holding the rights over a further 548,573 acres.

- The estate includes approximately 50,000 houses, 60,000 technical assets such as hangars or workshops and 20,000 other key assets such as runways and electrical networks.

- The cost of maintaining this estate is significant, approximately £2.5bn per annum and spread across too many inefficient assets and sites.

- Approximately 40 per cent of our built assets are over 50 years old and do not meet the needs of a modern fighting force.

- The size of the built estate has reduced by 9 per cent since 1999/00 compared to a total personnel reduction of 36 per cent.

News story: Around one million public sector workers to get pay rise

Around one million public sector workers are set to benefit from the biggest pay rise in almost 10 years, the government announced today (24 July 2018). The 1% cap ended last year in recognition that dedicated public sector workers deserve a pay rise.

A balanced approach to the economy means that today's increases are affordable within government spending plans:

- members of the Armed Forces will receive a well-above inflation increase of 2.9% (2% consolidated, 0.9% non-consolidated), with today's award worth £680 in pay to an average soldier, plus a one-off payment of £300
- the teachers' award means the main pay range will increase by 3.5% (2% to upper pay range and 1.5% to leadership). Schools will determine how it is set
- all prison officers will get at least a 2.75% (2% consolidated, 0.75% non-consolidated) increase this year, with many getting higher awards
- a police award of 2% (all consolidated) will mean average pay for a Constable will now be more than £38,600 per year
- a pay increase of at least 2% for junior doctors, specialist doctors, GPs and dentists. Consultants will also get a pay rise of at least £1,150

(From October 2018: 2% for dentists and junior doctors consolidated / 1.5% consolidated for consultants with an additional 0.5% targeted at performance pay / 3% consolidated pay rise for specialty (SAS) Doctors / Backdated to April 2018: 2% for GPs consolidated, with an additional 1% potentially available from April 2019 subject to contract reform)

This follows the 6.5% pay rise over three years that was [announced in March](#) for more than a million nurses, midwives and other Agenda for Change staff, in return for modernisation of terms and conditions.

It is also vital that our world class public services continue modernising to meet rising demand for the incredible services they provide, which improve lives and keep us safe. Secretaries of State will be taking forward work to continue modernising their workforces in the coming years.

Today's increases are funded from departmental budgets. Current and future affordability across the whole public sector was considered when agreeing final awards, alongside the advice of the Pay Review Bodies. This is to ensure that resources are available to invest in public service improvement, and that awards are sustainable without an increasing burden of debt being passed onto future generations. The UK already spends around £50bn a year on

debt interest, more than is spent on the police and armed forces combined.

Today's announcement is on top of good overall remuneration packages in place for public sector workers:

- public sector workers continue to benefit from better pensions than those offered in the private sector.
- median pay for full time employees in the public sector is £30,630 compared to £27,977 in the private sector.
- pay awards are on top of performance and progression pay, which remains automatic for some workforces.