

[News story: Defence Secretary announces £250M investment in new homes for service families](#)

The significant investment will see nearly 1000 new homes built in three locations across Salisbury Plain, the British Army's largest training area in the UK. The locations for the new housing are Bulford, Larkhill and Ludgershall.

The new homes, which will be built by British construction company Lovell, will offer modern three and four bedroom accommodation, as well as a number of bungalows and adapted homes for families with specific needs, such as wheelchair access. Work on the new homes, which are being built under the Army Basing Programme (ABP), is expected to be completed in May 2020.

The new homes will support Service personnel and their families relocating from Germany in 2019 and also units moving within the UK.

Pre-construction work on the project has already begun, including off-site highways to facilitate access to the new homes. The returning troops can expect modern accommodation, as well as access to catering, retail and leisure facilities.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

This considerable investment in nearly 1,000 new homes is a reflection of our commitment to supporting Armed Forces families. Service families make an immense contribution to our country and I'm delighted to announce this £250 million funding for new homes to welcome our troops relocating from Germany.

The £250 million investment comes alongside a further £90 million in road and utility improvements in support of the three developments. £1.1 billion has already pledged to the Salisbury Plain area for living and working accommodation 'behind the wire' including 2,500 bed spaces for single soldiers and the construction, conversion or refurbishment of nearly 250 other buildings such as offices, garages, workshops and mess facilities.

The Army is also working closely with Wiltshire Council to ensure that the soldiers and their families have access to all of the services they need, including education and health facilities. Wiltshire Council is spending over £20 million of the MOD's contribution towards local community services in support of education provision across all age ranges.

Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood said:

Investing not only in new homes but in all the things that help to make a place feel like home, such as education, infrastructure and leisure facilities, will make a big difference for those returning to the UK after being posted abroad. This boost to the area will provide a close-knit community for Armed Forces and their families for years to come.

The Army Basing Programme has also recently completed building and refurbishment of accommodation at a number of other sites across the country in support of Troops relocating from Germany and within the UK. The ABP has also invested in new facilities in Kinloss, Leuchars, Catterick, South Cerney and North Luffenham, and significant refurbishments have taken place at a number of other MOD sites including York, Aldershot and Thorney Island.

[News story: MSPs discover more about life in the naval service](#)

The purpose of their visit is to help MSPs to better understand the range of social and welfare issues relevant to armed forces personnel, and their families, within their community.

During their visit the MSPs saw displays of Royal Marine marksmanship, all terrain driving, stalking, artillery, and met with the Royal Navy's bomb disposal experts from HM Naval Base Clyde. They also met with the families of RM Condor and the Naval Families Federation.

Naval Regional Commander Captain Chris Smith said:

While Defence is clearly reserved to Westminster, it is the Scottish Parliament's policies and decisions that affect the day to day lives of Scots-based service personnel.

This is why it is essential that our elected representatives better understand military life, all the more so given that Scotland will be home to the entire Submarine Service from 2020, as well as an Army Infantry Brigade, the RAF's Quick Reaction Alert interceptors (North) and submarine hunting Maritime Patrol Aircraft flying from Lossiemouth.



As part of the Armed Forces Visit Programme, a group of MSPs visited the Royal Marine base at Arbroath.

Launched by Presiding Officer Ken Macintosh MSP and the Ministry of Defence in April, the Armed Forces Visit Programme has already had successful fact-finding visits to the Army's Glencorse Barracks, Penicuik, and RAF Lossiemouth, Moray.

The MOD has around 10,000 sailors, soldiers, and air personnel living permanently in Scotland, supported by 8,000 reservists and civilians.

Scottish industry benefits from Defence spending £1.5bn with it each year, supporting 9,750 private sector jobs in Scotland.

The Defence Board confirmed in February 2017, that £1.7 billion would be invested to upgrade Scottish military bases over the next decade.

List of attending MSPs:

- Keith Brown MSP, SNP, Clackmannanshire/Dunblane, (Cabinet Secretary Economy, Jobs and Fair Work/Veterans)
- Maurice Corry MSP, Conservative, West Scotland
- Graeme Dey MSP, SNP, Angus South
- Murdo Fraser MSP, Conservative, Mid Scotland and Fife
- Daniel Johnson MSP, Scottish Labour, Edinburgh Southern
- Liam Kerr MSP, Conservative, North East Scot
- Gordon Lindhurst MSP, Conservative, Lothian Region
- Lewis Macdonald MSP, Scottish Labour, NE Scotland
- Graham Simpson MSP, Conservative, Mid Scotland and Fife

- Annie Wells MSP, Conservative, Glasgow
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[News story: HMS Sutherland to deploy to Asia Pacific, Defence Secretary announces on-board](#)

Addressing the crew on HMS Sutherland this morning, the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson announced that the ship will leave Her Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Devonport in the New Year to represent UK interests across the Indian Ocean and into the Pacific.

In a period of ongoing tension in the Korean peninsula, the Type 23 Frigate will be available to work closely with our regional partners, including US, Japanese and South Korean, and participate in joint training and exercises.

This follows an announcement made by the Prime Minister that HMS Argyll will deploy to Japan to take part in exercises in December 2018 following participation in a Five Power Defence Arrangements exercise with Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia earlier in the year.

Speaking during a visit to the Devonport Naval Base, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our already strong defence ties with allies in the Asia Pacific area will be deepened further by this deployment.

At a time when North Korea's illegal weapons programme is causing global concern, the deployment of these two Royal Navy ships is a clear demonstration of the UK's commitment to the peace and prosperity of the region.

As well as addressing the crew of the ship during his visit to the Naval Base, the Defence Secretary watched operational sea training on board another Type 23 frigate, HMS Westminster, met with staff and saw facilities at the Submarine Support complex.

[News story: Defence Minister returns to Chelmsford to announce £18m contract to support Royal Navy radar systems](#)

The contract will ensure the continued availability of the battle-winning Long Range Radar (LRR) equipment on the UK's six Type 45 Destroyers, including maintenance and repairs. The work will sustain 11 highly-skilled jobs with BAE Systems in Chelmsford, as well as four in Portsmouth.

The announcement was particularly personal to the Defence Minister, who had her first ever work experience placement at Marconi in Chelmsford at the age of fifteen, with the expertise in radar technology from that site still evident today.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin, said:

It's been great seeing the cutting-edge innovation of British industry today, especially as my first experience of British business was so close to this site. This multi-million pound contract will boost the future of both this high-tech hub and our Navy's battle-winning radars.



Visiting BAE Systems' Great Baddow site, Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin announced a new £18 million contract. Crown Copyright.

Formerly the Marconi Research Centre and Advanced Technology Centre, the BAE site continues to be a cradle of innovation where some of the best brains in the world of electromagnetics and antennas develop new digital communications technologies. It is credited as the "Birthplace of Radio" after Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi started his business in Chelmsford.

Whilst at the site in Great Baddow, which homes BAE Systems' research and technology hub AI Labs, the Defence Minister met scientists and engineers and discussed space opportunities as well as Long Range Radar technology.

The Long Range Radar provides the Royal Navy with a detailed air surveillance picture of the battlespace, capable of automatically detecting and tracking hundreds of separate targets simultaneously at ranges of greater than 200 miles.

It is a key element of the Type 45 air defence capability and is also employed on the new Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers.

Richard Smart, Director Weapons for Defence Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement organisation, said:

The UK's Type 45 Destroyers are part of the backbone of the Royal Navy and this contract supports their primary air defence role, offering the best protection available to the ships and crew.

This support agreement is the product of the strong skills base we have in UK Defence. It will keep Royal Navy personnel safe at sea as they defend our interests all over the world.

The new contract, which will run for the next five years, will cover support for the entire Type 45 fleet as well as one shore-based facility in Portsmouth.

Les Gregory, Product and Training Services Director for BAE Systems said:

We are delighted to have been awarded this follow-on contract to support the Long Range Radars across the Royal Navy's Type 45 Destroyer fleet, which will also enable us to explore further growth opportunities.

[News story: Afghan National Army Officer Academy celebrates 10th graduation](#)

Afghan Officer Cadets have passed out of the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) today as part of the 10th graduation ceremony held at the site in Qargha, on the western outskirts of Kabul.

UK personnel, working with mentors from Australia, New Zealand and Denmark, are helping to train the next generation of Afghanistan's military leaders through mentoring the Afghan training staff and instilling the Sandhurst ethos at the academy.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The 10th graduation marks an important milestone in the academy's short but successful history. It has trained thousands of Afghans from all over the country, which is testament to our enduring commitment to Afghanistan.

Keeping Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorism helps keep our streets safe too. We are dedicated to building a capable and professional Afghan Army that will be the foundation of a strong and secure Afghanistan.

With UK support over 3,000 cadets have commissioned from ANAOA since

September 2014. The training of female Officer Cadets is progressing well, with much of their training integrated with their male colleagues. The 10th graduation will mean over 100 female Officer Cadets have now commissioned.

This year signals a milestone in the academy's history with the first female Officer Cadet awarded the 'Duntroon Sword' for the best overall Officer Cadet to commission from the Academy. Somaiya, 24, has excelled in a range of traditional military areas such as Skill at Arms and field craft and is extremely proud to have worked with the British Army and will be travelling to the UK next year to further her Officer training.

In addition to helping to train the next generation of Afghanistan's leaders at ANAOA, UK personnel play a leading role in NATO's Resolute Support mission. They lead the Kabul Security Force, which provides force protection for NATO staff in Kabul, and advise members of the Afghan Air Force in vital areas such as air-to-ground integration, command and control, and Training and Exercises.