

Defence Procurement Minister, Make UK Defence Summit speech

It's a pleasure to be here in Birmingham today for this Make UK Defence summit.

Before continuing I should formally introduce myself – I've been the Minister for Defence Procurement for around a month now.

As was just touched upon, unlike my ministerial colleagues in the department, I have a legal rather than a military background.

Which means I bring two things, I hope, to Defence.

First, an understanding of – and deep respect for – the rule of law. When we see the atrocities being committed in Ukraine, as unlawful as they are heinous, we are reminded how important it is to protect the rules-based international order, but also to do so with hard edged military assistance if required.

Second, I bring an open mind and a willingness to listen and learn from you. I'm not coming in with any preconceptions, other than this, I believe very passionately in small business and I believe it is in your interest and the nations interest that you get a fair shot when it comes to defence procurement.

That is particularly so in an era that is described by some as "a Golden Age of innovation". That is digital innovation but other innovation, new ways of management, how to manage data.

And let me say this too as an overarching way of principle. I come to this job very conscious of the advantages that come with speed of procurement and the risk that come with delay.

Perfect is the enemy of the good and 80% capability today is very often preferable to 100% capability tomorrow if tomorrow never comes.

There are so many examples of firms of all sizes giving us a crucial defensive advantage in this part of the world alone.

There's the team at Birmingham Airport who are converting Boeing 737s into E-7 airborne early warning aircraft.

There's the work being undertaken in Telford to manufacture Boxer armoured vehicles.

And all the exciting small businesses in this region who we will be championing next weekend on Small Business Saturday.

Take for example the Coventry-based SME Hygiene Pro Clean who – with help

from our Defence and Security Accelerator which provides access to over £250 million in excess funding – won a contract with the Welsh Ambulance Trust to roll out their rapid cleaning system to speed up the decontamination of ambulances during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

So, it's no surprise our current defence spend in the West Midlands is about £120 for every person living here.

But the important work of the SME work stretches beyond the boundaries of Birmingham and the Black Country.

As we battled the pandemic, we saw the entire Defence supply chain step up to produce ventilators, build Nightingale hospitals and move millions of pieces of equipment around the country.

More recently, it's been fantastic to see firms pulling together nationwide to get vital defensive weaponry into the hands of Ukrainians as quickly as possible.

And that takes me onto the third thing I want to do this morning and that is to set out my priorities for this role.

But before I do that, it's worth reminding ourselves of the context in which Defence is currently operating.

First, the threats we face as a nation are proliferating and intensifying.

Whether it's state-on-state aggression like we are seeing in Ukraine.

Or so-called sub-threshold dangers, including disinformation campaigns, cyber warfare and the sabotage of undersea cables.

Meanwhile, the global pandemic, the energy crisis and ongoing impact of climate change have not just increased the demands on our forces, but imposed additional demands on our resources.

Which means – as the Chancellor made clear in his financial statement last week – we need to deliver the maximum value for money, we need to deliver the maximum punch for our pound so to speak.

As a result, your role as suppliers to our armed forces is more important than ever.

Not just in keeping our forces equipped with everything they need, not just providing that innovation, technology, and cutting-edge capability which keeps us ahead of our adversaries, but through your achievements strengthening the entire sector so that no matter what happens, when the call comes, our nation is ready to respond.

Let me also say by way of context, that where there are challenges there are also great opportunities for firms like yours to expand into new markets.

Nations across the world are reawakening to the value of Defence.

France, Australia, the United States and Germany, of course, are among the countries to have increased their Defence spending in the last year.

That means we are now looking at a Defence export market potentially worth many billions of pounds more over the next decade.

So, how are we going to grip this moment and seize this opportunity?

Well, the good news is that we aren't starting from scratch – this is the third bit of context.

Most of you will be well acquainted with the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy – better known as DSIS.

Launched under one of my predecessors Jeremy Quin, DSIS marked a step-change in our approach to industry.

It means we now think about defence industry as a national strategic capability in its own right.

It means we are considering the much broader impacts of our commercial decisions, such as how we can boost regional economies, how we can develop new skills bases, and how we can develop national industrial capability.

But publishing any strategy is of course only the beginning, it is delivery that really counts.

We've been working alongside industry to deliver on over 50 commitments during the last year and a half.

Driving innovation, improving efficiency, and strengthening the entire sector.

Now, we need to build on that success and create Defence supply chains which are truly fit for this new, more competitive and unstable era.

So, turning to those priorities, they are only threefold:

First, we want to see a more resilient supply chain.

In this new era of global competition, we must make ourselves agile and resilient by design.

That's why last week we launched our new Supply Chain Strategy, the first in over a decade. You will be hearing from Major General Simon Hutchings who will cover in more detail our approach to that strategy.

But in a nutshell, this is a clear mandate to do things differently to maximise the resources at our disposal.

That means moving away from an exclusive focus on cost-cutting and efficiency savings.

And instead considering reliability, through-life service and environmental

sustainability as part of the package too.

We're also going to prioritise in ensuring supply chains are flexible enough to cope with sudden disruption.

And we want to work closer than ever with you, our industrial partners, to build genuinely collaborative relationships.

Including by having better visibility of firms – the SME and mid-tier companies – in that critical supply chain.

And doing so by sharing more information because that allows us to make better decisions.

And that brings me onto my second objective; greater collaboration with SMEs.

Now, perhaps more than ever we need SMEs to play their proper part in this national mission and I am personally committed to that goal.

So where have we got to?

Last year 23% of our procurement budget went to SMEs – that's a procurement budget of over £20 billion a year – that's up from 13% in 2016/17.

But we want to go further and we are targeting 25% for next year. That's a bold but important ambition.

Now I recognise, even after a few short weeks in this post, that smaller suppliers face unique challenges like 'barriers to entry' as economists sometimes refer to them.

And that is why we are determined to make the barriers to working with us as low and as navigable as possible.

At the heart of that determination is our SME Action Plan, published in January.

Setting out how we're maximising SMEs' opportunities to do business with us.

Take for example our £16 million Defence Technology Exploitation Programme – it's offering grants up to £500,000 to help SMEs develop new technologies and processes.

Meanwhile our new Procurement Reform Bill is helping SMEs by slashing the number of complex regulations which govern public procurement.

But we have also created a new single supplier registration system, which means bidding companies will only have to submit their core credentials once, making it cheaper and easier for you to work with us too.

Another key part of the Action Plan is our new SME Working Group within the Defence Suppliers Forum – which works closely with Make UK.

It brings together SMEs from across the country, to sit alongside primes and

MOD representatives. It is already beginning to bear fruit.

During its first year, it's addressed the use of Framework contracts on Defence and how to measure our impact on the SME community.

So, to my third priority; boosting exports.

That's because partnerships are not just crucial on our own shores.

If we are going to capitalise on the massive potential export market that I eluded to earlier, we need to strengthen industrial ties with our global partners.

That's because that in turn enables greater information sharing, greater interoperability with our allies as I saw myself in the Mojave Desert a couple of weeks ago with our Australian and American allies, and it also enables greater strategic planning.

So, I want to drive better use of our strong and unique network of military officers, industry secondees and over 5,000 trade specialists.

Based across the UK and within 120 countries, they can help promote innovation, opportunity and partnership around the world.

We are also creating a more efficient system for managing any government-to-government relations in support of your exports.

Meanwhile the UK DSE Export Faculty is working with the wider Department for International Trade Export Academy to provide SMEs with advice and support.

So that's an overview of what we're doing and where we want to go.

There's a lot of different strategies and policies in there but the three most important words are ambition, resilience, and collaboration.

And that collaboration really matters because if we are to really succeed, if we are to grasp these opportunities of this era to make you thrive and to make us safe, we are going to need your support too.

So let us know what support you need to innovate and expand. Constructive engagement is welcome.

Let us grasp those opportunities on offer to turn your cutting-edge ideas into cutting-edge capabilities.

Let us seize the moment presented by excellent events like this, to meet new people and new business partners to strike up new business relationships.

Your success is our country's success and government will be willing you on.

Thank you.

Work completed on Ouse Washes protects thousands of homes

Press release

Cambridgeshire property and land retain flood protection.



Environment Agency staff train with Jackson Civil Engineering to put the demountable flood barrier up

A multi-million pound project to raise the Middle Level Barrier Bank of the Ouse Washes Flood Storage Reservoir has been completed.

Following 6 years of construction, the project maintains the standard of flood protection to more than 2,000 properties and 67,000ha of agricultural land. The raising of the bank on the vitally-important reservoir was carried out between 2017 and this year.

As the Washes are an internationally-important habitat, construction work was carried out during summer and early autumn each year to avoid disturbing breeding and over-wintering birds. New bird hides were installed during the project to help visitors continue to enjoy this important landscape.

This summer, work was carried out to enable the installation of a demountable flood barrier outside the village of Welney. The barrier will be used to prevent water spilling from the reservoir into Welney village. It will replace the use of large sandbags to create a temporary barrier across Welney Wash Road, the A1101. The barrier will be installed when the water level in the reservoir reaches a predetermined level and the road has been closed by Norfolk County Council.

The works ensure compliance with recommendations made by the reservoir inspecting engineer under the Reservoirs Act 1975.

There will now be a further two years of maintenance at the site to establish

grass cover. This is needed to ensure the stability of the newly-raised bank.

Nicola Oldfield, a project executive for the Environment Agency, said:

This has been a vital long-term investment and refurbishment programme.

We know the impact that flooding can have, which is why protecting people and communities is our priority.

The results of this work will help to protect thousands of homes and businesses in the area for years to come.

Everyone should know their flood risk and sign up for free flood warnings by going to <https://www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk> or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188. You can also follow @EnvAgency on Twitter for the latest flood updates.

- The total cost for this project was around £40 million.
- Between 2015 and 2020, we invested more than £1 billion on maintaining flood and coastal defences nationally. This included investing in developing technology and direct maintenance work such as dredging, inspecting assets, and carrying out repairs.

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[Supporting resilient and sustainable development in Least Developed Countries: UK statement at UN Second Committee](#)

Madame Chair,

Let me begin by congratulating you and the Bureau for your able stewardship of the Second Committee's work this year.

The United Kingdom would like to thank Mr. Abdulrahman Abdulaziz Al-Thani from the Permanent Mission of Qatar, for his excellent facilitation of the 'Follow-up to the Fifth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries.' We

would also like to thank the G77+ representative, Mr. Nirupam Dev Nath, from the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh, and the LDCs Chair representative, Ms. Dorcas Mwangi, from the Permanent Mission of Malawi for their constructive engagement.

The UK is pleased with the outcomes of this year's text, as it advocates for international solidarity in support of the Doha Programme of Action. We need renewed global partnership and targeted focus, with full mobilization of the UN system, for sustainable and resilient development in LDCs. This resolution is a step in the right direction.

The UK is committed to working with LDCs, development partners, and multilateral institutions to progress the six priority areas in the Doha Programme of Action. We look forward to participating in the Fifth UN Conference on the LDCs in March at a high-level, to advance this critical agenda.

The United Kingdom will continue to support the global goal of providing at least 0.2% of our gross national income to LDCs. However, we know we must go further than this. Partnership between public and private sectors will be essential to meet the SDG financing gap, which is why we will also mobilise up to £8 billion of UK-backed financing per year by 2025 through British Investment Partnerships.

The UK is also committed to addressing food insecurity in LDCs, which was a key area of discussion in this negotiation. We are working alongside partners – such as the UN-led Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, the G7 Global Alliance for Food Security, the Roadmap – Call to Action and the EU-led Solidarity Lanes – to meet humanitarian needs. We are keeping food and fertilisers moving, providing emergency funding, improving resilience, and accelerating transition to sustainable food systems that will withstand future challenges in places experiencing food crises.

As we approach 2030, we must accelerate action and ambition to deliver the Doha Programme of Action and respond to the needs of the most vulnerable first. You can count on the UK's support.

Thank you.

UK secures £1.84 billion investment for ESA programmes with support for Earth Observation sector

- UK government commits £1.84 billion for important space programmes at this year's European Space Agency Council of Ministers meeting, held in

Paris

- the investment will cover a range of programmes from space sustainability to supporting the UK-built Rosalind Franklin Mars Rover
- up to £200 million has also been committed to support the Earth observation sector as the EU continues to delay association to the Copernicus programme

Science, Research & Innovation Minister George Freeman, who led the successful negotiations in Paris with the UK Space Agency, has secured record commitments to grow the UK space sector and deliver on National Space Strategy ambitions, an increase on previous investments made in 2019.

The landmark deal includes:

- important UK investment of £315 million in Earth observation and climate programmes: a 45% increase, deploying funds set aside for Copernicus participation to support the sector while EU programme association continues to face delays
- ESA commitment to the UK-built Rosalind Franklin Mars Rover, which is set to launch to Mars in 2028, with UK industry set to play a leading role in developing a new landing platform
- UK leadership in space sustainability via satellite management, maintenance and retrieval to support UK ambitions to lead in global space sustainability regulation and innovation
- leading UK involvement in commercially focused programmes, including communications and navigation, driving further innovation in the satellite industry
- UK leadership in the Vigil space weather mission, which will travel to a point in deep space known as L5 and give advance warning of dangerous solar storms, enhancing and securing observational capabilities, while supporting expertise such as that delivered by the UK Met Office's Space Weather Operations Centre
- enabling the UK to set the standards for satellite climate measurements, with funding secured for further development of the TRUTHS mission, which was first proposed by scientists at the National Physical Laboratory to deliver a 10x increase in the accuracy of climate measurements

As a founding member of ESA, which is independent of the EU, the UK's space and commercial satellite sector will play a leading role in future international missions and innovative commercial programmes. There are over 47,000 jobs in the UK space sector, which generates an estimated £16.5 billion every year.

Satellites provide vital insight into the climate and our environment, and the UK committed in the National Space Strategy to remaining at the forefront of Earth observation technology. New investments will allow the UK to work with ESA to use space to fight climate change and deliver programmes that support our national interest.

UK Science, Research & Innovation Minister George Freeman said:

The rapidly growing global commercial space sector is driving a new space race for geopolitical and commercial soft-power. This is the frontline of our science superpower mission.

Space is a fundamentally collaborative endeavour, so the European Space Agency Council of Ministers was an important opportunity to deepen our international relationships with the goal of advancing space technology for the benefit of all.

I'm delighted to return from the meeting with such a strong package of commitments, as well as being able to provide support for our outstanding Earth observation sector, to protect it from the uncertainty caused as a result of the EU's delays, as we continue seeking Copernicus association.

These new investments will support the ongoing growth of the UK space and commercial satellite sector – creating new jobs around the UK from Cornwall to the North of Scotland – and securing UK leadership in space sustainability. They will put our scientists and engineers at the forefront of some of the world's most important missions and programmes which drive transformational innovation.

The UK committed £615 million to ESA's core space science budget, securing opportunities for UK companies to bid for high-value contracts and establishing new scientific leadership roles for UK universities. Upcoming ESA science missions range from hunting for rocky Earth-like planets outside our solar system (Plato) to sending the first gravitational wave observatory into space (LISA).

The UK space sector will benefit from the following commitments:

- £217 million towards the global exploration programme, supporting robotic missions to Mars and contributing to the Artemis Moon programme, including the Argonaut (European Large Logistics Lander), Gateway space station and commercial lunar communications systems
- £206 million for telecommunications programmes, building on the success of the European Centre for Space Applications and Telecommunications in Harwell, to enable faster 5G and future 6G connectivity, develop new optical and quantum communications systems, and support constellations of Low Earth Orbit satellites
- £111 million to bolster space safety and security, improving forecasting and building resilience to dangerous space weather, protecting critical national infrastructure, tackling the growing challenge of space debris and catalysing growth and further investment in high-potential areas including in-orbit satellite servicing and manufacturing
- £71 million to back new technologies, helping smaller businesses develop new ideas and products, reducing reliance on non-European nations for important electrical and electronic components, supporting emerging areas such as space-based solar power, and creating radioisotope heat and power systems derived from nuclear waste, to fuel a new generation

of missions

Through our investments in ESA, we are taking part in a range of ambitious programmes that will help keep the UK at the forefront of Earth observation technology and knowhow. This includes investment in Aeolus-2, ESA Digital Twin Earth and InCubed-2, as well as additional, targeted funding in TRUTHS and the FutureEO programme. The package of measures delivered through ESA, as part of a wider programme of support for the UK's Earth Observation sector totals £122 million.

Additional investments include over £30 million on satellite navigation innovations and £13 million to support commercial spaceflight, as we countdown to the first satellite launches from UK soil.

Dr Paul Bate, CEO of the UK Space Agency, said:

From protecting our own planet to exploring new worlds, we invest in these programmes because they benefit humanity and deliver a strong return to the UK economy.

Our membership of ESA adds significant firepower to our national space ambitions, complementing the UK Space Agency's work to catalyse investment, deliver new missions and capabilities, and champion the power of space for businesses and people across the country.

Taken together, this represents the most ambitious and comprehensive package of investments with ESA ever. This also comes following last week's fiscal statement last week, in which the Chancellor pledged to maintain the UK's commitment to increasing R&D investment to £20 billion per year in 2024 to 2025.

Copernicus and Earth Observation

These investments come in the context of continued delays from the EU in agreeing the UK's association to the EU research programmes, including the Copernicus Earth Observation programme.

The Earth observation sector has suffered instability as a result of this uncertainty, which is why the government has announced a package of up to £200 million in support today, deployed as part of the funding initially allocated to EU programme association, and which has not been utilised for this purpose for 2 years given the ongoing delays.

A £122 million segment of the package has been committed to 5 of ESA's outstanding programmes, with a further £66 million being allocated to 12 UK-led projects.

The package covers a robust range of national and international projects across all facets of the sector, from gathering and processing, to the

application of, Earth observation data. There is a strong focus on climate and meteorological science, building on the UK's significant strengths in this area, while delivering direct benefit to the UK economy and supporting our shared global ambition to combat climate change.

See [more information on the Copernicus mitigation package](#).

Notes to editors

1. All subscriptions to ESA programmes are made in euros so GBP figures are subject to foreign exchange rates.
2. The total investment figure includes £378 million to manage inflationary impacts and volatility in foreign exchange rates.

Royal Navy ships to be fitted with advanced new missile system

Royal Navy frigates and destroyers will get a significant boost to their long-range precision strike capabilities following a new partnership between the UK and key NATO and Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) ally, Norway.

Strengthening defence ties between the UK and Norway, the Royal Navy will receive the Naval Strike Missile (NSM), outfitted on a total of eleven Type 23 frigates and Type 45 destroyers, in a collaboration with the Norwegian government.

Measuring nearly 4 metres long, the NSMs are a fifth-generation missile using integrated sensors and autonomous target recognition to precisely strike enemy ships and targets on land at distances of more than 100 nautical miles (115 miles) at high subsonic speeds. It can elude enemy radar and defence systems by flying at sea-skimming altitude and using evasive manoeuvres.

Announcing the maritime capability upgrade, the Defence Secretary also met with Northern Group Defence Ministers on board the Royal Navy's flagship, HMS Queen Elizabeth, alongside in Oslo.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

We have a long history of defence cooperation with Norway. This new agreement cements our partnership with one of our closest allies, whilst strengthening our Royal Navy with a new surface to surface strike capability.

Replacing the Harpoon surface-to-surface weapon, due to go out of service in 2023, the world-class anti-ship missile will be fitted to three vessels at pace and will be ready for operations onboard the first Royal Navy vessel in a little over 12 months. The collaboration will result in more ships equipped with the highly sophisticated naval strike missiles which in turn will contribute in enhancing the security in our common areas of interest.

The missile system will be integrated in UK Dockyards through Babcock and BAE with Norwegian support, the missile system is manufactured by Kongsberg Defence Aerospace.

NSM will enhance collaboration and interoperability with several of our key strategic partners. In the North Atlantic and Baltic Sea Region users, and soon to be users, include Norway, the US, Poland, Germany, and Canada. Both the US and Australia will operate NSM in the Pacific region.

Norwegian Minister of Defence Bjørn Arild Gram, said:

This is a significant task with an ambitious timeline. Both nations have established a designated team with a strong mandate to ensure the success of this common effort. The Norwegian company Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace is supporting the joint team with their expertise and the planned integration on the UK vessels.

The meeting of Northern Group Defence Ministers on HMS Queen Elizabeth, will see discussions on the implications of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, security developments in Northern Europe, and Sweden and Finland's NATO membership applications.

The Northern Group is a UK initiative which aims to promote more coherent, efficient and effective defence and security co-operation in northern Europe. It comprises 12 nations; Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the UK.