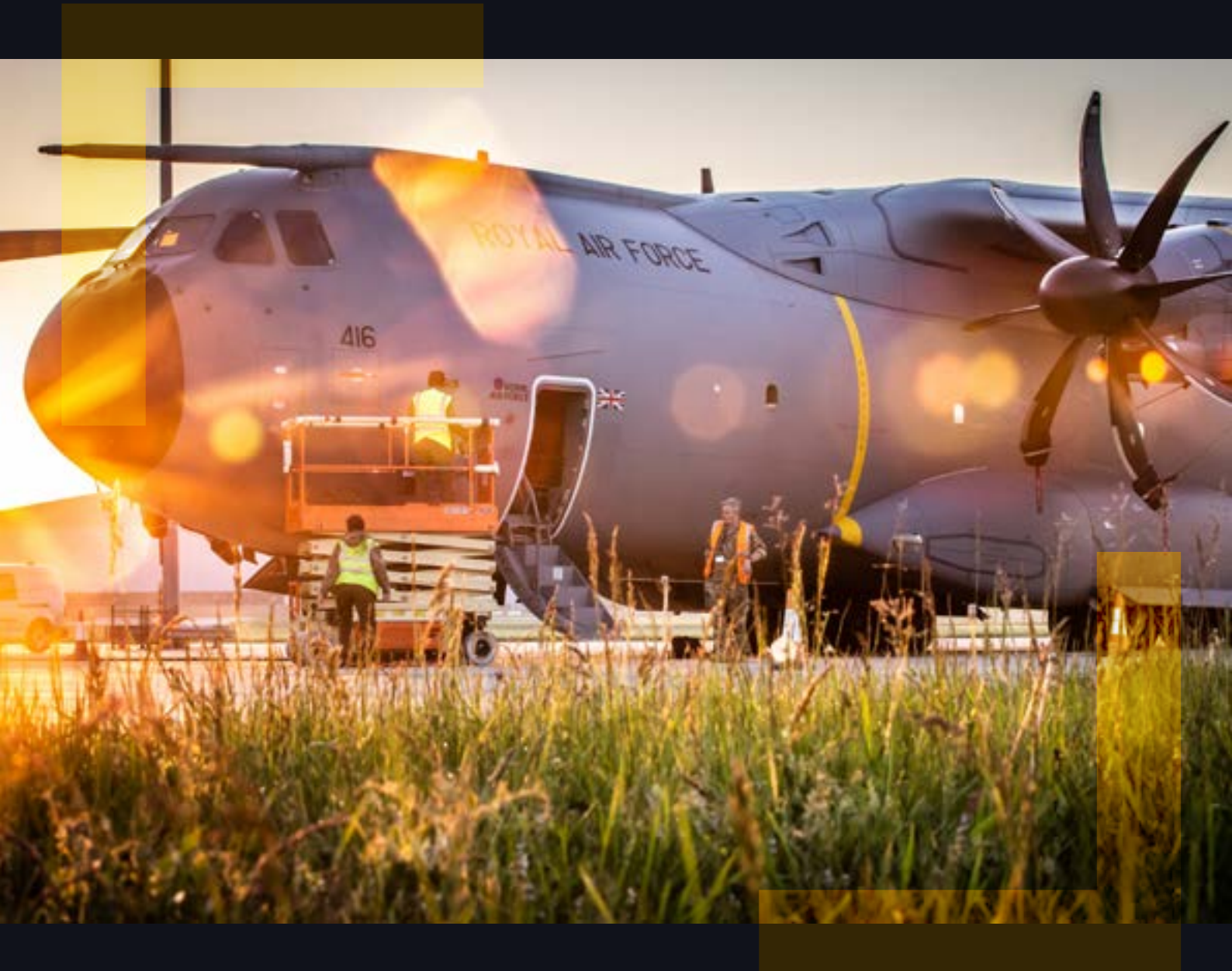


DESIDER

AN INSIDE LOOK AT DEFENCE EQUIPMENT & SUPPORT



**PROTECTING OUR NATION, OUR TERRITORIES AND OUR ALLIES
TODAY, TOMORROW, TOGETHER**

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START Talking

**With guest editor Andrew Forzani,
Director General Commercial**

Welcome to the June issue of Desider. This month we explore 'social value' and its growing role in defence procurement. Since joining as Director General Commercial, I've been struck by the passion and commitment to social value on display throughout DE&S and across the defence community. While this has been great to see, there are certainly issues and concerns with its implementation that we need to face jointly with industry.

Social value is still a relatively fresh concept and isn't something that always springs to mind when people think about defence procurement. But defence acquisition in the UK will be worth an estimated £85 billion over the next four years and, since January 2021, every government contract above a certain threshold, has had to include details of the social value it will deliver to UK communities.

Social value, put simply, is the positive social, environmental and economic impact that procurement contracts can deliver. Benefits can range from creating new jobs and safeguarding essential skills in the UK workforce to improving the health and cohesion of a local community and supporting environmental protection and improvement. They are always delivered in addition to and as a part of the equipment or service being procured. Social value showcases the powerful contributions that government contracts and the industry supplying them can make for society.

As one of the largest government procurement organisations, DE&S has a significant role to play and we must make sure we maximise the social value impact of the contracts we procure. By broadening the benefits that are delivered and supporting key social outcomes, aligned with DE&S and Defence strategies, the positive impact for the UK can be enormous. As of 5 May, DE&S had awarded 42 contracts with social value commitments in them (25 percent of the MOD total).

I see DE&S as being on a social value journey. As more procurement projects with social value threaded through

them move from award to action, we are starting to see tangible results. This is the exciting part, when procurement contracts begin to have real impact. Suppliers are expanding employment opportunities, skills development and supply chain diversification, enhancing the natural environment, increasing diverse workforce representation, reducing inequality, tackling modern slavery, and improving physical and mental wellbeing.

Our approach to social value is guided by the Social Value Centre of Expertise (SV CoE). The SV CoE is a model example of the One Defence approach. Hosted within DE&S, they engage delivery teams through a network of focal points across the MOD to ensure the Social Value Model is applied consistently and effectively.

Of equal importance, we are working directly with industry through the Defence Suppliers Forum, recognising the concerns they have shared, to ensure it works better in the future. Industry feedback has focused on the consistency of the social value asks that we include in our procurements and how these are scored and evaluated. This is an area where we will need to improve overall, as doing so will drive greater confidence in the system and ideally get industry to make greater social value commitments. Another specific area of contention is how a supplier's corporate social value programme is evaluated as part of an individual procurement and how they can get credit for the broader investments they have made. This is a tricky area, but one that we're trying to resolve through the SV CoE where we will be providing more guidance shortly.

Social value is essential to making sure our work doesn't just keep the nation safe, it also makes it healthier, happier, fairer and more prosperous. Over the coming year we will be looking to share more lessons learned and the success stories of social value impacts already being delivered. My hope for the next 12 months is that we see social value becoming more deeply embedded in how DE&S does business.

FEATURE

The promise of social value in defence procurement

The MOD and defence industry face opportunities and challenges to effectively embed social value. Here Peter Coy, from the MOD Social Value Centre of Expertise, explores how these can be tackled together.

When the UK Government introduced the Cabinet Office Social Value Model in 2021, following the Social Value Act 2012, it fundamentally changed public sector procurement.

The Social Value Model is a way for suppliers to demonstrate the additional social value they can create when tendering for government contracts. It established common objectives for social value, focusing on a set of priority themes, to harness government spending power for the benefit of communities and the environment.

The MOD's focus is on the themes of tackling economic inequality, fighting climate change and equal opportunity. Suppliers bidding for contracts are now judged not only on the standard metrics of quality, time and cost, but also on the additional benefits their work will bring within those themes.

The MOD set up the Social Value Centre of Expertise to realise the Government's ambition for the Social Value Model. It's this Centre of Expertise that helps procurement teams consistently apply the Social Value Model, develop connections with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors, and most crucially collaborate with defence suppliers.

Since the Social Value Model was introduced, the MOD and DE&S have made great strides towards ensuring colleagues and partners across Defence make the most of social value. However, we are still on a learning journey and face three key challenges: consistency, reporting and collaboration.

Consistency. The MOD is a large, complex organisation. It faces a significant challenge to implement social value and apply the Model in way that is consistent and clearly communicated. But a clearer focus on explaining why social value criteria are relevant and proportionate, and using early market engagement to test them, will help suppliers understand our intent and deliver impact and benefits for society.

Reporting. The Social Value Model sets out our generic reporting metrics, which are a starting point, but may not align with the specific proposals from a supplier. By working with suppliers, it is possible to set additional metrics that are better aligned to the proposed social value. An example of this is the sector-specific additional metrics under the theme of fighting climate change, which DE&S environmental engineers and industry are developing.

Collaboration. The Model requires social value be proposed contract-by-contract, which can encourage single-project collaborations. Social value with a lasting legacy, however, is best achieved through a long-term coordinated approach,



where suppliers work with communities, and industry and MOD collaborate. The Social Value Model creates a common language that enables collaboration and this is already happening through the Defence Suppliers Forum, with both industry and the MOD giving their time to make social value work.

I believe that social value in defence procurement has the potential to create long-lasting benefits for people and the environment. But only if all those involved in the defence supply chain, from MOD to SME, commit to meaningful collaboration and engagement with each other and, crucially, with the people and communities that will receive them.

FEATURE

Embedding social value in the Defence enterprise

David Whipp, Social Value Subject Matter Expert at the MOD Social Value Centre of Expertise, talks to Desider about Defence's transformational social value journey.

In May's Desider, we read how the Digital Exploitation for Defence (DX4D) programme is moving Defence from an enterprise with digital functions to a digital enterprise, and how this will come from having a defence strategy that embeds and mainstreams digital rather than simply has a digital strategy.

In this issue of Desider, we focus on social value and embedding the Social Value Model into defence procurement. Just as Defence is on a journey to fully exploit digital opportunities, we are on a transformational social value journey.

How do we become an enterprise where social value is embedded in our conscious thinking and an integral part of how we do business each day?

Social value should be seen as more than just a value-add. It needs to become embedded as a whole defence activity, ingrained in how each of us thinks, in the same way as we all understand the need for health and safety. Social value must be supported by senior leaders and threaded through strategic plans, management processes, education and training across the Defence enterprise.

We don't just need to collaborate; we need to do so radically. We are looking for radical social value progress, which is more than just the business as usual of any healthy organisation. We need to select our changes with purpose and intent. We need to work collectively with all our stakeholders, internally and externally. We won't get to our end goal alone; we are stronger and more resilient together.

This is about trying something new, learning from failure as much as success, and looking beyond our normal defence supply chains. We need to break out of our natural defence silos and think bigger about the social value that could be delivered through defence contracts. Suppliers should feel able to suggest anything, however small, that's relevant, even if it's supporting another government department, for example health inequality or energy resilience. Radical collaboration for us may mean altering our delivery priorities for social value.

Embed social value correctly and it should be considered by suppliers and procurement bodies from the earliest concept and requirements phase. This allows the



Social Value Model to be used as a lens through which to develop and deliver new initiatives, and accurately record data and impact.

Take, for example, an outdated factory in an area with poor-quality air that's harming staff and the local community. Its owner is bidding on a new programme that will include massive upgrades to the factory. As their social value contribution, they may decide that it would be in the best interests of the company and the community to improve the situation. The Model will help them find a solution through collaboration with partners in local government and civil society, and will guide them to the correct metrics.

This is how we move from today to tomorrow, and mature together.

What is important is to consider the bigger picture. So be it a One Defence policy or a One Government priority theme, we encourage suppliers, large and small, to radically collaborate with us. Come and join us on this exciting social value journey – all are welcome.

FEATURE

DE&S volunteers give their time to support the Big Help Out

Three volunteers from the MOD-wide Volunteers Network tell Desider what they did as part of the Big Help Out.

As part of the Coronation weekend, the Big Help Out was launched nationally to raise awareness of volunteering throughout the UK, and to provide opportunities for people to experience volunteering and make a difference in their communities.

The motto of the Big Help Out is 'Lend a hand, Make a change'.

The Volunteers Network connects people from across the MOD who have a strong desire to volunteer with organisations and improve the lives of those around them. The network allows members to connect and supports them to make the most of their volunteering activities.

Many members of the Volunteer Network took part in the Big Help Out. Here are just three of their stories.

Michelle Picton, DE&S Commercial Delivery Partner Lead, co-chair of the Volunteers Network and Girl Guiding Rainbow Leader, volunteered on the day of the Coronation. She spent her day in Hyde Park, London, at one of the large public screenings. Starting at 5am, she helped the general public with queries, distributed flags and acted as an ambassador for Girl Guiding, while everyone watched the events of the day unfold on the big screen.

"In between the showers, we helped hundreds of people have a wonderful, memorable day, even when the rain poured. The culmination of hours of hard work and commitment from so many people made it a thoroughly enjoyable volunteering experience. It was an honour to meet so many incredible people. Our volunteers are amazing and I'm very much looking forward to my next opportunity to represent such a fantastic charity."

Project manager Phillipa Brunt volunteered at the new Wild Place Project in Bristol (the successor to Bristol Zoo). Phillipa and her fellow volunteers spent the day painting signposts, putting bird



feeders back out following the end of bird flu precautions and weeding a plot so it will be ready to plant the pumpkin seeds that feed the project's animals.

"Despite the constant drizzle, which didn't dampen our spirits one bit, I felt such a boost from volunteering for such a positive cause and can't wait to do it again. Even in the rain!"

And the DE&S Operational Delivery Graduates organised a volunteer gardening day at the Brightwell Centre, which supports people living with conditions that affect the brain, central nervous system or spinal cord, including

multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome and Parkinson's disease. This included weeding the path in the Therapy Garden, clearing and building an area for a vegetable patch, and clearing the weeds and moss out of the tiles surrounding the building.

"We had an amazing day meeting the staff and members at the Brightwell. It was great to see the different equipment and support the centre offers, including the oxygen tanks and the physiotherapy provision. It was fantastic clearing the paths around the building and in their therapy garden, as well as creating a veg patch!"



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FEATURE

NEWS

DE&S HR Director becomes first to achieve people development status twice

DE&S attains top HR accreditation from the CIPD, recognising their investment in its people's professional development

Dr Jill Hatcher, HR Director at DE&S, has become the first person in the country to have led two separate organisations to gain a top business accreditation.

Dr Hatcher and her team played a key role in DE&S, which employs 11,500 people, being awarded People Development Partner accreditation by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. They award People Development Partner status to recognise organisations for the support and development opportunities they offer to their people. In her previous role as HR Director for the Home Office, Jill also helped that organisation achieve accreditation.

Dr Hatcher said: "After a huge amount of hard work from everyone in our HR team, we are delighted to achieve this accreditation. Not only does it recognise the commitment of our team, but also means those working within the organisation have access to quality training and development opportunities to enhance their careers and to be the best they can be."

Over the last 18 months the DE&S HR team has worked closely with the CIPD to demonstrate the exceptional commitment it has to developing its professionals. DE&S has invested in training, experience assessments, apprenticeships, CIPD membership and qualifications to ensure its people are well-supported and encouraged to learn and develop.

To achieve People Development Partner accreditation, an organisation must demonstrate a commitment to continuously invest and build the capability and credibility of its people function.

Talent Acquisition Manager Mavis Darkwah is currently completing a CIPD Level 7 course, fully funded by DE&S. She said: "DE&S provides really good opportunities for its people to learn and develop. I get a day a week to study, I have peers doing the same course, so we lean on each other for support, and I am putting the skills and techniques I am learning into practice so that I can continue to develop and grow in my role."

The CIPD is the professional body for HR, Learning and Development, Organisational Development and all people professionals, with almost 160,000 members globally. It champions better work and working lives, helping organisations



thrive by focusing on their people, and supporting economies and societies.

Ray Worrell, Senior Employer Solutions Manager, at the CIPD, said: "We are so proud to be able to award DE&S People Development Partner status. It shows that your people function is central to the aims of the organisation and that their professional development is a priority. The CIPD really values People Development Partner status. Not only is it about recognising organisations for aligning with our professional values, but it shows an exceptional degree of commitment to professional development."

FEATURE

DE&S staff selected for Invictus Games 2023

DE&S project manager Nick Waldrom and operations manager Lynsey Kelly, both armed forces veterans, have been selected to represent Team UK at the 2023 Invictus Games.



Two DE&S staff members, Special Projects project manager Nick Waldrom and A400M Fleet operations manager Lynsey Kelly, have been selected to represent Team UK at this year's Invictus Games.

Lynsey, an RAF veteran battling with a debilitating illness, was diagnosed with exertional bilateral anterior compartment syndrome, a muscle and nerve condition that causes intense pain, weakness and numbness. She was medically discharged from the RAF in 2010 after an operation on both legs was unsuccessful.

"As well as struggling with chronic pain, and all the general worries that come with leaving the military, I felt worthless and as though I'd failed at all I'd ever wanted – I'd lost the kudos, the travel to far flung

places, the obscure and interesting jobs, and the social life. The profound effect on my mood would heighten the pain, which in turn would make me feel worse."

Lynsey was further diagnosed as having Pain Amplification Syndrome, a secondary fibromyalgia disease attributed to the psychological stress of her experiences and chronic pain, which changes the way her central nervous system works. This left Lynsey with continuous widespread pain, sensitivity to light, smells and sound, extreme fatigue, difficulty regulating temperature and cognitive impairment.

Lynsey was inspired to take up swimming by those competing in the 2018 Invictus Games, and found a course facilitated by the charity Help for Heroes. After struggling to come to terms with her

condition, Lynsey was encouraged by her swimming teacher to apply for the 2019 Department of Defence Warrior Games, where she was voted Vice-Captain for the UK team.

This was closely followed by the 2020 Invictus UK trials, where Lynsey broke her Warrior Games personal best in swimming and won a gold medal in the Women's Open Recurve Archery. She was selected for the Games, which were delayed until 2022 because of the pandemic, but had to drop out due to illness.

"When people say 'recovery', you immediately think of returning to how you were before your illness or injury. But there is no going back. You don't just recover, you more reinvent yourself into something different from what you were before – accepting and embracing ourselves as we break, as we heal, and as we reconstruct. I always use the phrase 'broken crayons still colour' and it's absolutely true. I honour my growth and am proud of who I am – I am about to represent all that the poppy symbolises and prove that determination has no disability."

Lynsey, currently based at RAF Brize Norton and soon to be relocating to RAF Coningsby as the Typhoon Transformation Manager, will be representing Team UK in swimming and archery at the 2023 Invictus Games in Dusseldorf in September.

As part of her recovery Lynsey has also helped coach others to achieve their goals. "I'm happiest when helping others and feel pride in anyone putting effort into becoming a better version of themselves. Sports recovery has been so valuable to me, not just physiologically, but socially too. I want to carry forward that gift; to inspire, champion and support, because if I can, they definitely can!"

NEWS

UK leads NATO drive for greater armaments cooperation

Andy Start, DE&S CEO, joined fellow National Armaments Directors for crucial talks at NATO Headquarters.

DE&S CEO Andy Start has played a key role in deepening UK collaboration with NATO allies, particularly in their response to the war in Ukraine.

In his capacity as National Armaments Director, he represented the UK at the recent NATO Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD) spring plenary meeting in Brussels, joining his colleagues to strengthen cooperation on acquisitions, capability development and relations with industry.

Immediately before the CNAD, Andy hosted National Armaments Directors from France, Germany, Italy and the United States in London, where they discussed the actions needed to bolster partnerships across the Alliance.

The CNAD is an important group within NATO, where National Armaments

Directors work to improve cooperation and alignment within their acquisition processes and operating models, to strengthen their collective battle-ready capabilities.

The meetings in London and Brussels were important demonstrations of unity among allies, who were able to address the challenges posed by the war in Ukraine. During discussions, the UK emphasised the need to take a more strategic, agile and outcome-focused approach to ensure NATO and its member nations maintain their defensive advantage.

Discussions during the meetings in London and Brussels will also influence decisions that will be made at the next NATO leaders' summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, in July.

The UK is leading allied-thinking aimed at fostering greater cooperation, with an emphasis on the value of greater engagement with industry, in particular in relation to providing a demand signal to enable current and future planning.

The UK is particularly keen to ensure NATO allies focus on strengthening their defence industrial base and replenish their stockpiles, so these remain ready to defend the Alliance and its values, even as support for Ukraine continues unabated.

These meetings are an important element of DE&S' One Defence agenda, encouraging nations to work together more effectively in their collective security interests.

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FEATURE

Bringing together the Defence enterprise for social value

The Defence Suppliers Forum is working hard to join up all those involved in Defence to meet the social value challenge and make the most of the opportunities it brings.

The Defence Suppliers Forum (DSF) enables strategic engagement between the UK Government and the defence industry by facilitating effective information sharing, aligning objectives and optimising the delivery of defence capability.

Recognising the importance of working closely with defence suppliers to deliver social value, the DSF social value working group was created as a forum for engagement between the MOD and UK defence industry. The group is a space for sharing feedback on the challenges and successes, identifying best practice and areas of improvement in the application of the Social Value Model and enabling action around concerns raised. It is co-chaired by MOD and Industry representatives, and made up of small and medium-sized suppliers, trade bodies and primes.

The Social Value Model requires the Defence enterprise to think hard about the impact procurement can have. Social value, as a concept, is new for suppliers and procurement organisations alike, and it is important to acknowledge the learning curve it involves. The Defence enterprise has reached a pivotal moment in its social value journey. Those involved have enough experience to see what's working and where greater efforts are needed. Yet, one organisation's added value is another organisation's business as usual. A model that evaluates an organisation's current maturity and its commitment to change through qualitative evaluation and comparison requires a level of openness and transparency that is unusual between suppliers. This different approach is leading organisations and companies to be more open, more willing to share ideas and work towards collective best practice.

The DSF social value working group and the Social Value Centre of Expertise are committed to continuing this engagement and to working with suppliers to bring about meaningful economic, social and environment impact for communities. As a space for collaboration and resolution, the group has already held a face-to-face event for all DSF members to share case studies of applying social value to real defence contracts to help flatten the learning curve.

The DSF social value working group has several high-level objectives for 2023 to help all those involved in social value initiatives. They are developing guidance to clearly set out what good looks like and guide expectations, and a mentoring programme for small to medium enterprises to help them move

beyond a standard contract-to-contract short-term approach. Alongside this, DSF is developing a Social Value Data Platform to help suppliers identify and understand social value opportunities and their potential impacts.

What is not in doubt is the level of passion and commitment from suppliers and the MOD to make the most of social value, showcasing the best of Defence and making a difference to the communities and environments we live and work in.

Now, the most important thing is committing to understand, to make a difference, to put in time and resources, and then crucially to be willing to share within DSF where impact has been made and what has been learned, in a spirit of journeying together.



NEWS

News in Brief

DE&S CEO gives keynote address at SupportNet 23

DE&S CEO Andy Start gave the keynote address on the second day of the SupportNet 23 conference in London on Friday 19 May. Organised by Strategic Command Defence Support, SupportNet 23 gathers defence leaders, industry, academia and international partners to discuss and reflect on how to deliver greater resilience for UK Defence Support.

Speaking alongside General Sir Jim Hockenhull, Commander Strategic Command, Andy Start made it clear that defence acquisition and support is a team sport that requires the entire Defence enterprise to work as one. He spoke about DE&S' goals for the coming year and the urgent need

to increase availability and support that is driving their plans to refresh its organisation-wide strategy.

"A need to be better is what's driving the DE&S strategy, but our strategy is really a collaborative defence enterprise strategy, helping us to deliver the defence output, which is helping us to protect the nation... We have recognised that there is a compelling need for us to change.

"In terms of our mission output, we're trying to get DE&S and the 160,000 of us who work in the defence industry that are part of that enabling capability into a position where we equip the UK Armed Forces with the edge to keep the nation safe."



DE&S recognised for involvement in Stepping Up programme

Stepping Up was launched by Bristol City Council in January 2018 to increase diversity in leadership by bringing together organisations to identify potential leaders from under-represented groups.

Each year-long programme offers leadership modules, career management, mentoring and learning day stretch-assignments to help build participants' leaderships skills and enhance their career prospects. DE&S has participated in every cohort since the programme began.

Jo Osburn-Hughes said: "We are thrilled that DE&S has been recognised for its five-year long involvement with Stepping Up. Since its launch in 2018 the programme has provided more than 20 participants from DE&S with

the opportunity to gain new skills, build confidence and help fulfil their leadership potential.

"As well as our commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty, it was important for us to work more closely with Bristol City Council because of Abbey Wood's proximity to the city. We're delighted to receive this award in recognition of our support for Stepping Up and as a celebration of our commitment to diversity and inclusion."



DE&S has received an award for supporting Stepping Up Bristol, a leadership initiative for people from diverse backgrounds in Bristol and the south-west region. Jo Osburn-Hughes, DE&S Diversity and Inclusion Co-champion, accepted the certificate of excellence at a ceremony on 17 May.

NEWS

New £70 million contract for Type 31 mission systems test and integration facility

DE&S agrees deal for a new Type 31 frigate mission systems test and integration facility.

A shore-based test and integration facility will be kitted out with Type 31 mission systems equipment, under a deal placed by DE&S with Thales that secures dozens of UK jobs at the Thales Above Water Systems unit in Crawley.

The £70 million contract will provide equipment and technical services at the Type 31 Mission System Shore Integration Facility in Portsmouth Technology Park, the Royal Navy's test and integration facility in Portsmouth.

The facility will ensure the mission systems and equipment, which will be fitted to the five Type 31 frigates, can be safely and effectively used by Royal Navy personnel on-board the vessels.

With a significant UK-based supply chain, this contract is one of many that will support the manufacture and testing of Type 31 vessels before they enter the fleet. More than 2,650 jobs are being supported by the Type 31 programme, delivering on the Government's commitment to grow the economy and support jobs across the UK.

DE&S Director General Ships Vice-Admiral Paul Marshall said: "I am incredibly proud of the Type 31 team at DE&S who have worked collaboratively and with great endeavour to secure this critical contract as the ships move ever closer to entering service with the Royal Navy."

The entire Type 31 fleet is expected to be delivered by the end of 2028 and to enter service with the Royal Navy by the end of 2030.

Commodore Steve Roberts, Deputy Director Ships Acquisition with the Royal Navy, said: "The Royal Navy is excited about the capability and flexibility that the Type 31 Class will bring. The ships will conduct critical maritime security tasks and the Type 31 Mission System Shore Integration Facility will play a vital role to ensure the ships are ready, and remain ready, to undertake these operations."

Type 31 will be equipped with innovative technology and will benefit from MBDA's Sea Ceptor, a supersonic anti-air missile

defence system, as well as a 57mm and two 40mm Bofors naval guns, and a 4D radar system.

The newest of the Royal Navy's frigate fleet, the Type 31s will undertake a variety of roles, including interception and disruption of illegal activities at sea, intelligence gathering and humanitarian support. The vessels – by design – also have the ability to adapt to the ever-evolving threats of the 21st century.

Minister for Defence Procurement James Cartlidge said: "I'm delighted to see this continued collaboration with industry, ensuring the critical combat capabilities on our Type 31 fleet will be not only world-leading in terms of capability, but safe for our personnel. Type 31 will be a critical asset to the Royal Navy and this significant investment will secure a number of highly skilled jobs in Crawley, beyond the thousands of further jobs across the whole Type 31 programme."

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NEWS

22nd Atlas A400M touches down at RAF Brize Norton

The twenty-second Atlas A400M transport aircraft, procured by DE&S for the RAF, has landed at RAF Brize Norton.

The twenty-second Atlas A400M transport aircraft has arrived at RAF Brize Norton, completing the UK order for Atlas, under the development and production phase of the programme. DE&S is responsible for delivering the Atlas A400M fleet and continues to provide in-service support.

The four-engine turboprop Atlas can deliver 37 tonnes of cargo over 2,000 nautical miles at an impressive speed. Its exceptional short-field performance means pilots can take off and land from short unprepared and semi-prepared airstrips, even at night using night-vision goggles.

As well as deploying troops and equipment, Atlas aircraft have been used to support humanitarian missions including responses to major flooding and earthquakes. Most recently Atlas was used to evacuate British nationals from Sudan following a surge in violence.

To mark the occasion, DE&S A400M team leader Nick Moore was in Seville where the aircraft have been assembled by Airbus. He took handover from Airbus before handing over to the RAF.

Nick said: "Being in a position to handover aircraft 22 to the RAF was a great honour, and I have done so on behalf of the entire A400M team at DE&S who have worked tirelessly alongside our colleagues at Airbus, OCCAR and the RAF to deliver this outstanding aircraft. All of us can be rightly proud of our role in ensuring the RAF can transport troops and equipment where needed, both in support of military operations and critical humanitarian missions."

Since entering RAF service in 2014, Atlas has repeatedly proven itself. It has excelled during relief operations in the Caribbean and contributed to the military response to the Covid-19 pandemic, transporting patients, equipment and vaccines. It played a pivotal role in the evacuation of entitled personnel from Afghanistan and has provided support

to UK operations around the globe, including the Middle East, Falkland Islands and Mali.

Air Vice-Marshal Mark Flewin CBE, Air Officer Commanding No. 1 Group, said: "Recent events in Sudan have illustrated once again the importance of tactical air mobility. Operating from a basic airfield, Atlas helped evacuate over 2,200 entitled personnel and fly them to safety. The latest aircraft therefore joins a fleet which is already proven on operations and utilised globally in support of UK interests."

Atlas also supports enduring operations in the Middle East and NATO Air Policing operations in the Baltic. In the UK, Atlas has a 24/7 national standby commitment and has supported the UK Border Force with maritime reconnaissance (MRR) in the English Channel, long-range search and rescue (SAR) and overwatch. An Atlas is also based in the Falkland Islands, providing MRR, SAR, medical evacuation in the South Atlantic and airdropping of supplies in Antarctica.



NEWS

commences on Protector under DE&S contracts



Aircrew, including pilots and sensor operators, from 54 Squadron have begun training on a new remotely piloted aircraft system.

Aircrew training on Protector RG Mk1, the RAF's new remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS) has begun in the United States.

The 12-week training course will see pilots, sensor operators and mission intelligence coordinators from 54 Squadron learn how to fly and operate Protector at the General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Flight Test & Training Center (FTTC) in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

The RAF has ordered 16 Protector RG Mk1s to replace its MQ-9A Reaper. Protector has a wingspan of 79 feet and will carry UK-made Paveway bombs and Brimstone missiles. The contracts for the aircraft system and training were negotiated and placed by the DE&S RPAS delivery team.

Simon Holford, RPAS team leader at DE&S, said: "DE&S is proud to have

placed contracts enabling this critical training, which will be undertaken using the world-class Protector aircraft and certified ground control stations recently accepted off-contract by UK MOD."

Aircrew training, which includes both simulation and live-flying, will focus on the skills needed to operate Protector and its equipment, including real-time exploitation of intelligence involving the multi-spectral targeting system and synthetic aperture radar. The mission intelligence coordinators, who undertake a six-week course, will also learn how to operate the mission intelligence station.

Air Commodore Simon Strasdin, RAF ISTAR Force Commander, said: "I am delighted to see our first cohort of Protector crews commence training on this phenomenal platform. Reaper has been at the core of RAF combat operations in Afghanistan and the

Middle East for almost two decades, demonstrating the utility and effectiveness of RPAS in the modern battlefield. The increased capability, flexibility and lethality that Protector brings will see a step-change in how we support UK Defence."

The new training follows the graduation earlier this year of the first RAF Protector technicians who will maintain the aircraft and its systems.

Equipped with a suite of advanced equipment and precision strike weapons, Protector will provide critical armed surveillance capability and will be able to deploy against potential adversaries around the globe. The aircraft will also be able to fly in busy unsegregated airspace thanks to 'detect and avoid' technology with an endurance of over 40 hours.

PEOPLE

Alex Aitken

Name:

Alex Aitken

Job title:

Maritime Command Lead, Futures Lab.

What does your role involve?

I am the Maritime Command Lead for Futures Lab, a collaborative pan-industry and academic group delivering impartial insight and decision-making support as part of the DE&S Future Capability Group. I work with Front-line Command and wider MOD clients, predominantly in the maritime and testing and evaluation spheres, to understand their needs and the challenges they face in providing the capability to counter evolving and emerging threats. Together, we look at how the Futures Lab can help them map a path to achieving the required capability.

What do you most enjoy about your job?

I love the variety and range of work I get to do. I really enjoy the team nature of the work, working with colleagues, clients, suppliers and authorities. The environment provides a great opportunity to continuously expand my knowledge. I'm enjoying being involved in projects and programmes at the forefront of shaping future defence capability, and learning about the new and developing technologies that will deliver the solutions.

What is the greatest accomplishment in your career so far?

Being the arrangement and outfit lead on the design team of the Royal Norwegian Navy's Logistics Support Vessel, HNoMS Maud. It was a unique vessel design, completed against a tight timescale, but the fantastic relationship with the client and the shipyard created a close, hard-working team that was entirely focussed on success (with a lot of good humour along the way). Attending the naming ceremony of HNoMS Maud in Bergen, Norway, in 2019 and seeing the completed ship 'in the steel' for the first time was a very proud moment.

What keeps you energised about working at DE&S?

In my Futures Lab role, I enjoy working closely with my clients in Navy Command and the defence innovation spheres. In Navy Command, there is a real energy to get things done quickly and to explore new and different ways of doing things to achieve a better outcome.

Who or what has shaped who you are?

Several people have influenced my career and the way I conduct myself, but it is those who respect, recognise, listen to and support every member of their team who have been the best leaders and had the greatest impact on me.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

With two teenage daughters, life is very busy, but when there is any spare time we all enjoy getting to the coast for some water-sports.

What might surprise people about you?

I tend to be open by nature and don't hide much about myself.

What's the best advice you've ever been given?

Life is not a rehearsal.



The famous Red Arrows conduct a flypast through London to celebrate King Charles III's Coronation. Photographer: Cpl Phil Dye.



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Cover photo: An A400M, based out of RAF Brize Norton, lands in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

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Desider is the monthly corporate magazine for DE&S. It is aimed at readers across the wider MOD, armed forces and defence industry. It covers the work of people at DE&S and its partners, and other corporate news and information.

A large commercial airplane is positioned on a runway, viewed from a low angle looking down the center. The runway has a prominent yellow center line that recedes into the distance. The sky is overcast and grey.

DESIDER