

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*

Our job in Defence is to predict, plan and be prepared.

If we get this right, we can safeguard the UK's freedoms and build a secure platform for prosperity.

This year, we face a more complex, threatened world. We face adversaries who have placed their economies on to a war footing, who seem increasingly willing to engage in acts of grey zone aggression, from misinformation campaigns to cyber attacks and sabotage.

In 2025, the onus is on us to continue building the structures and systems, and developing the skills and expertise, that deliver even greater warfighting readiness and stronger alliances; to guarantee we can respond to the expected and the unexpected with equal pace and impact.

Efforts are well underway by our new government – working with teams in DE&S and across the enterprise – to establish a UK Defence that more ably protects the nation and drives growth.

The initiative is creating a stronger defence centre, headed by the MOD Permanent Secretary, the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) and a new National Armaments Director.

Alongside a stronger Department of State, CDS will head up a new Military Strategic HQ, where they will for the first time command the Service Chiefs. And a new National Armaments Director will lead a National Armaments HQ, with oversight across UK defence procurement, including DE&S. They will have the powerful levers and whole enterprise insight needed to execute the UK's defence plans and deliver the capabilities our personnel need. This new structure will help secure better value for money and outcomes for our Armed Forces.

The National Armaments Director will play a pivotal role in delivering the UK's next Defence Industrial Strategy and will be a key figure in our new Defence Industrial Joint Council, which replaces the Defence Suppliers Forum. As co Chair of its Executive Group, I've been a vocal supporter of the Defence Suppliers Forum, and the benefits that a shared government industry space brings, and I see this as a very positive evolution.

As part of the changes taking place across Defence, DE&S is looking to March, when the transition into our new operating model is due to be completed. We've reshaped DE&S to be a more effective partner within UK Defence, prepared to play our part in enacting the Defence Industrial Strategy and supporting the Strategic Defence Review. The new model is built on smarter, leaner, more consistent

processes. These are more responsive to shifting defence priorities, and deliver capabilities at the pace and scale our mission partners need.

One thing we can be sure of in 2025 is the UK's ironclad commitment to supporting Ukraine's liberation and future security. The UK has now provided £12.8 billion pounds of assistance to Ukraine, and a further £4.5 billion boost in 2025 will see us procure hundreds more air defence systems, drones and essential equipment support to sustain their forces and protect their people. Our UK industry partners are ramping up production to meet Ukraine's requirements, creating UK jobs, and delivering on the Government's growth agenda.

The war in Ukraine continues to be a stark reminder of the threats Europe faces and the importance of the NATO alliance. NATO is a defence alliance unlike any other in history. But, in 2025, we are in a race of defence production and defence innovation. It is crucial that, in the year ahead, NATO broadens its industrial vision, galvanises investment in industrial capacity, and increases collective development and procurement. Our new National Armament Director will represent the UK on key NATO bodies, advocating for greater interoperability, pan NATO standardisation and a robust alliance wide defence industrial base, where we do more and spend more together.

That need, to predict, plan and prepare, can be seen in the capabilities soon to come into service. UK Defence is delivering successive generations of drones faster than ever before. And the Boxer armoured vehicle's modular design ensures it can be rapidly adapted to suit a range of missions, now and in the future. It was great to see Maria Eagle, Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry, unveil the first completely UK produced Boxer at the International Armoured Vehicle conference.

But there is more the UK needs to do to develop and exploit innovation, and bring capabilities and upgrades into service with more speed.

To be ready for the military, technological and logistical challenges of the year ahead, government and industry need to work hand in hand, as One Defence, to meet the challenges we can predict and prepare for, and those we cannot. I'm confident that the work of 2024 and the plans in place for 2025 will ensure Defence delivers that.

SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

"More consistent, considered and coherent"

Kash Patel, DE&S' first Director of Commissioning tells Desider about Gateway Commissioning and how it will support UK Defence in 2025 and beyond.



I am honoured to have been appointed as DE&S' first Director of Commissioning.

Having operated on all sides of defence equipment and support delivery over the past 24 years, I have first-hand experience of many of the challenges associated with it. I'm therefore determined to make meaningful changes that cut through bureaucracy and unwieldy processes, so we can start to operate in a way that delivers operational excellence.

We are charged with providing commissioning services that are efficient, repeatable and scalable, and which allow us to maximise the impact of DE&S' work in support of Defence's key priorities. As part of the launch of DE&S' new Gateway, my team has already made great progress in forming the Commissioning Directorate.

We have centralised our services, such as portfolio management and planning and costing new projects, from four domains into a single team. In the months ahead, we

will begin offering a set of portfolio management capabilities and services that are more consistent, considered and coherent.

My aim for the Commissioning Directorate is to ensure a DE&S delivery portfolio that is delivered in an efficient, assured and sustainable way. To achieve this, we will need to fulfil some key functions. We will need to provide our mission partners with informed choices regarding what we can deliver and be more considered as to how we deliver it. And we will need to assure them that we are delivering their funded and approved requirements in a way that looks coherently across the whole portfolio of work, and that any risk to these is well-understood and well-managed.

We have brought the expertise of the former Defence Equipment Sales Authority and the Exports Portfolio Office into the Commissioning Directorate. This will capitalise on the overlapping work these teams do to support UK growth and foreign policy objectives. It also helps to better ensure that this type of revenue generating work is properly integrated, prioritised and resourced as part of the wider DE&S delivery portfolio.

Since standing up the Commissioning Directorate, we have made significant progress in developing our ways of working – both within DE&S and as part of the wider Defence enterprise.

No organisation or business can operate with operational excellence if demand and supply are not brought into a manageable and sustainable balance. Reflecting this, our focus so far has been to provide our mission partners with a more strategic,

pan-portfolio interface. We are aligning their requirements with our ability to deliver them through improved management information flows, better planning and control of new work, and the implementation of a new prioritisation process. This work will continue throughout 2025 as we help our mission partners navigate near-term affordability challenges, while ensuring alignment with our own DE&S delivery capacity challenges.

I hope that our industry partners will start to experience a DE&S that acts with more intention and coordination – both at a strategic and a project-specific level. Through the Commissioning Directorate, I am very keen to better engage the collective intelligence of the wider defence enterprise, including in our industrial supply base, to help achieve our aims for DE&S' delivery portfolio that is coherent by design and deliverable in an operationally excellent and sustainable way.

Alongside managing the current portfolio of work and any near-term changes, we will also actively support UK Defence by informing the Strategic Defence Review and the ongoing design work of the Defence Reform programme. This will ensure that the eventual integration of these overlapping programmes of work is as seamless as possible.

We're at the beginning of an exciting journey and, while I don't have all the answers, I have a clear vision of where the Commissioning Directorate needs to go. There are clear opportunities for us to better support Defence to navigate the tricky challenges that lie ahead of us and I welcome colleagues from across the defence community to join us on the way.



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NEWS

Rethinking our acquisition assumptions

Trevor Taylor, Director of the Defence, Industries and Society Programme at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), challenges some procurement premises and prescribes a way forward for UK Defence.

This is the first in Desider's new series of external thought leadership features. The below represents the views of the author and not of Desider, DE&S or the Ministry of Defence.

The established UK approach to defence procurement is based on some outdated premises, which I argue should be replaced by a new understanding that reflects the more uncertain, fast-changing defence landscape we operate in.

It is inaccurate to describe the defence procurement system as 'broken', but it does need to rethink its assumptions to keep up with a changing world.

An initial procurement premise is that when a specific capability requirement is set by military authorities, it will remain durable from that point until it enters service. Yet, today, rapidly evolving threats and technology mean a requirement is likely to change through the implementation of a procurement strategy, the selection of a successful offer and agreement on contract terms. One that survives intact through to production and initial acceptance is even less probable.

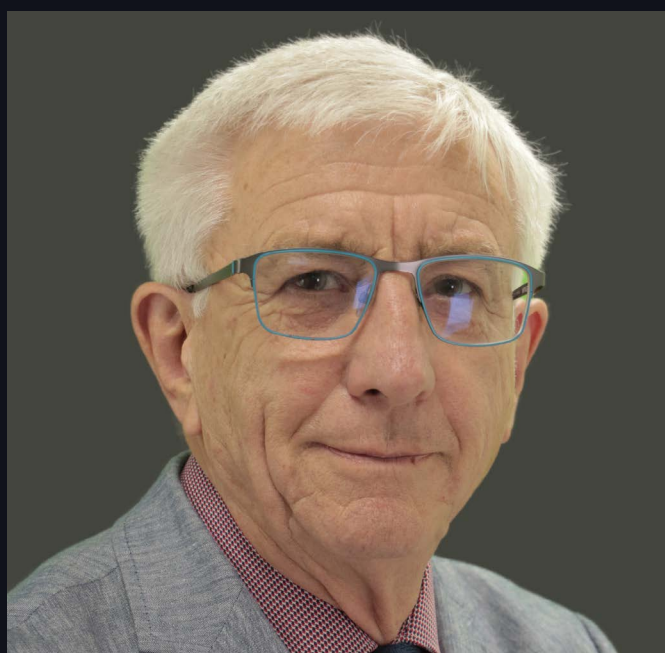
Then the premise of 'best value' in contract awards should be recognised as more complicated and dynamic, and significantly subjective. It includes direct military utility and costs, but also operational independence, which rests on the competence of national industrial capabilities, and contributions to UK prosperity and the strengthening of the Union. And the contribution to environmental impact cannot be overlooked.

A third premise is that the setting of requirements, running a competition and the negotiation and agreement of a contract should not be hurried. Yet with technology advancing at breakneck speeds, the defence enterprise needs to keep pace, even in peacetime. There is a clear need to better balance the commercial risks of contract ambiguity with the operational risks of delaying the entry of a new requirement into service.

Looking forward

This government, following its predecessor, is stressing the need for greater defence industrial capabilities. Unfortunately defence industrial capabilities cannot be turned on and off like a tap. It is much easier to rebuild a neglected military capability than it is to regenerate a major industrial capability.

UK Defence should consider reducing its reliance on contracts to deliver what is needed. I recently asked an experienced defence project manager which he would prefer: a good contract with a supplier or a good relationship with them. He opted immediately for the relationship. The increasing fluidity of requirements underlines the wisdom of his point. Despite their frequent length, contracts can never provide for every possible situation in a fluid and difficult to predict world marked by the emergence of unexpected threats. Contracts will always be needed, but it is the relationships between different parts of Defence that are likely to increase in significance.



All these considerations suggest that the MoD as a whole, including DE&S, needs to have a closer, more open relationship with suppliers in key defence industrial sectors, marked by mutual transparency and mutual awareness of organisational interests. But, to have that requires the MoD to ensure it is an expert, intelligent customer able to understand and contribute to what it is being told by the private sector.

Obviously the UK cannot be completely self-sufficient in major defence systems. It must be ready to embrace international collaboration, and the new gains and risks this brings. The UK has looked mainly to peer countries for collaborative projects, but the terms and conditions under which working with the US can be made compatible with wider UK policy goals needs to be addressed. Ideally collaboration should yield a UK capacity to sustain and modify a system, with design authority status or some equivalent held in-country.

In the light of Ukraine's war, collaboration should also be an element in generating the industrial capability for the 'consumables' needed in sustained war. There is also a case for considering defence imports only from a party that trusts the UK sufficiently that it will share the data needed for British sustain and modify activities.

Finally, much of the above is focused on the government sector. But, to retain a satisfied customer, the private sector will need to rethink their business models regarding their role in equipment support.

FEATURE

Distribution Centre North: Project governance done right

DE&S and its partners are successfully delivering the Longtown Distribution Centre North, thanks to a commitment to clear governance, collaboration, communication and swift decision-making.

Building large infrastructure might not be the traditional remit of DE&S, but, with the Longtown Distribution Centre North (DC(N)), this is what the Logistics, Services and Commodities (LSC) team set out to do.

At 76,000m², the DC(N) warehouse, located at Defence Munitions Longtown, will be a flagship of the MOD's Storage Network when it reaches full operating capacity in spring 2025.

The LSC team started their DC(N) journey in November 2021, alongside project management specialists CBRE, primary contractor McLaughlin & Harvey, and delivery partner Team Leidos (itself a partnership between Leidos and supply chain specialists Kuehne + Nagel).

Les Millar, DE&S LSC Project Director, said: "DC(N) is a step-change in MOD warehouse capacity, enabling storage of equipment associated with new capabilities, better storage of existing materiel, and the potential to retire geriatric warehouses. This is a clear improvement in estate resilience, which also offers opportunities to improve military resilience through storing more materiel and providing space to spread out and improve access to key items."

To help the project work efficiently, create streamlined communication channels and ensure efficient decision-making, each of the project's stakeholders has been represented by a small team of project and programme managers. For the duration of the DC(N) project, Les was empowered to make key decisions on behalf of the MOD, which helped keep the building work on schedule and focus his team's efforts.

Liam Copsey at CBRE said: "The thing that stands out about this project is that we have been able to deliver it so quickly, with flexible governance in place to make decisions. Often, projects can get stuck in governance, but that hasn't happened with DC(N)."

Projects, such as DC(N), which are delivered on existing MOD estates, require regular liaison with host teams to ensure they do not impact ongoing operations or the safety and security of daily activities. "The biggest challenge we faced was coordination with the base," said DC(N) site manager Callum Moffat. "But DC(N) shows how a collaborative approach can deliver a major project on time and on budget, with minimal impact on the day to day running of the base."



According to John Bradley, a project manager with Team Leidos, "Establishing a joint programme structure and a delivery-focused project framework to work within from the outset, cemented collaboration and promoted a 'one team' ethos. This positive team focus helped shape new and revised solutions to overcome some significant challenges."

Simon Kirk, Kuehne + Nagel Project Manager, added: "Our experience has been smooth and productive, as a result of the collegial and proactive attitudes of all involved. Such a large-scale project will always have a reasonable degree of complexity due to its various layers and organisation of the project, and we have navigated that in a structured way as a team. We're on track to deliver as planned and look forward to completing what has been a sizeable undertaking that everyone should be proud of."

Les Millar concluded: "DC(N) is a fantastic example of what you can achieve with a group of stakeholders who share a common goal and are passionate about delivering success. We have worked in a collaborative way to find deliverable solutions that protect the timeline and the project cost of our joint endeavour. I am incredibly proud of our collective approach."

SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

Providing value for defence and increased platform availability

Geraint Spearing, Chief Executive of DE&S Deca, tells Desider about Deca's merger into DE&S and the exciting future ahead.

This is my first time writing in Desider and it comes at an exciting time for DE&S Deca. Formerly the Defence Electronics & Components Agency, we merged into DE&S as an operating centre in April 2023. In January 2025, we transferred into our new home in the Logistics, Services & Commodities (LSC) area.

This shift places us side-by-side with similar parts of DE&S, including the Defence Munitions facilities and the British Forces Post Office. Like us, these areas are less office-based and have a primarily industrial workforce. Working within LSC offers us the opportunity to enhance our capabilities through shared best practice and further unlock our potential to provide greater value for defence.

Delivery of value is one of DE&S Deca's primary aims. We do this through a focus on 'repair, not replace', where we provide more sustainable maintenance and repair solutions, often at much lower cost than a traditional replacement approach. For example, when a critical electronic depth display was declared obsolete by the original equipment manufacturer, a proposed system redesign for the Royal Navy fleet would have cost around £8 million. Instead, our team diagnosed a component fault and engineered a replacement solution, avoiding over 95 percent of the system redesign cost.

Not only does our work offer financial savings for Defence, we also provide increased platform and equipment availability. Deca engineers recently repaired a mission-critical communication sub-system for HMS Vanguard, enabling her to deploy on-schedule to support the UK's continuous at-sea deterrent.

The benefits of our merger into DE&S are already clear. By bringing together our specialist expertise with DE&S' scale and reach, we have begun to streamline our processes and enhance our ability to respond more swiftly to defence needs. Our integration into DE&S has created a powerhouse of defence support capability that serves our Armed Forces better than ever before.

This will continue to develop as part of DE&S' new operating model. What excites me most is the ability to get involved from the earliest stages of the defence procurement cycle, ensuring that sustainment is a core consideration from day one. This strategic shift will pay great dividends. Our early involvement means we can anticipate challenges, plan more effectively and deliver more sustainable solutions.

We're also overhauling our commercial processes to make it easier for defence partners to place contracts with Deca for long-term maintenance and repair solutions. The aim is to reduce red tape' and focus on delivery of services.



These improvements aren't just internal. Our industry and mission partners tell us they appreciate our more agile approach, our enhanced capability to support defence resilience, and our clearer, more responsive communication channels.

I see enormous potential for further growth and innovation. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to work more closely with DE&S colleagues to deliver better support and resilience through increased efficiency and greater agility. With more integrated demand planning we'll be able to focus on the most important support solutions for both MOD and industry partners, at home and abroad. For our people, we'll be able to unlock our teams' potential and support their growth through access to broader career paths, diverse project experiences, and enhanced professional development programmes.

As we continue to evolve, our focus remains steadfast on supporting our armed forces with the agility and expertise they deserve.

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FEATURE

From ambition to reality: Strengthening UK Government project delivery

Karina Singh, Director of Function, Insights and Profession, explains how the Infrastructure and Projects Authority is embedding project delivery best practice across the Civil Service.

Major government projects are those with the largest scope, most risk and highest profile. Across the UK Government, we have over 250 of these, alongside thousands of smaller projects.

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) is the centre of expertise for major government project delivery. We are on a mission to improve how we deliver major projects. We work with government departments, arm's length bodies – like DE&S – and industry to define what good looks like and strive for better.

Every major project is different, but it's possible to distil some common threads that run through successful projects. First and foremost is understanding the project's goal, and the benefits you have been entrusted to deliver for UK citizens, to ensure your team works singularly towards this.

Second, a project is like a temporary organisation set up for a sole purpose, and the make-up of its team is crucial. They need the right skills and experience, and the right training and coaching, to deliver. The leadership skills of the project's senior team can have a huge impact on its success. They must provide a clear narrative and a strong focus, keeping calm and regrouping as the project changes. Their personal resilience and ability to rise above the seeming chaos is key to a project's success.

Then it's about embedding good delivery practices and applying them consistently. Across Government, there are 47 different departments, plus over 400 arm's length bodies. Many are conceptually and culturally quite different, but there are pockets of good practice everywhere and plenty of lessons we can learn from them. For example, having a really good commercial strategy or good relationships with your supply chain.

The challenge and opportunity we have, as the IPA, is to consistently embed good practice and help others recognise and adopt this.

Project delivery, compared to something like accountancy, is a young profession. Accountants follow standard practices that have been set for decades. We're not yet at that point with project delivery and a lot of people have their own way of doing things. Each project is a new entity, and it's natural to want to build processes anew, but quite often the best practices already exist.

Standardisation is a big theme for us. It saves money and saves time. It's at the core of what the DE&S describes as 'operational excellence'. We want people to adopt and adapt the wheels already out there, rather than reinventing them for each project.

To that end, at the IPA, we've developed, piloted and refined standard project delivery practices, and we know they work.

This year, we're focused on providing expert guidance and tools, developing professional skills and creating accessible resources to transform good intentions into consistent delivery, making sure we improve with every project.

Alongside our leadership programmes, accreditation schemes and revamped Government Project Delivery Hub, we're rolling out a comprehensive project delivery guide, called the Teal Book. This was developed through extensive collaboration with subject matter experts, inside and outside government. There's more to do, but the Teal Book is a big step in the right direction. We also have some great guidance on sustainability, which will be essential in order to meet our net zero commitments.

This is about empowering each of us to deliver better outcomes for the UK. As we look to the future, the question isn't just what we can accomplish today, but how we can build on these foundations to achieve even more.



FEATURE



Boxer's year of significant progress

With delivery of prototype vehicles, and initial production vehicles and trials well underway, 2024 was an important year for Boxer, as the programme made great strides forwards.

The Mechanised Infantry Programme, known as Boxer, reached several crucial milestones in 2024.

In the summer, the first production series Boxer vehicles arrived from Germany, which marked the start of the delivery phase. The Mechanised Infantry Programme will ultimately provide the British Army with 623 vehicles across four variants: infantry carrier, specialist carrier, command and ambulance.

Since its trials programme began in December 2023, Boxer has demonstrated superb performance. DE&S engineers, working with their army colleagues, have provided invaluable support throughout the trials, ensuring the execution of each one and assisting industry partners in the generation of crucial safety and compliance evidence.

A full set of UK Boxer prototypes are now completing their vehicle performance verification and validation (V&V) trials, enabling contractual acceptance and safety case maturation. Ninety five percent of the low-roof V&V trials are finished, which have included stowage and trundle, noise and vibration, electromagnetic compatibility testing, live firing and even sea trials. The delivery of the ambulance variant prototype in November 2024 also enables specific trials for the high-roof variant.

The accuracy shown in the live firing trial on Lulworth Ranges was particularly impressive. It marked the first time the general-purpose machine gun, heavy machine gun and grenade machine gun were fired from a British Boxer. The trial-firing of a Javelin missile will follow in 2025.

The battlefield mission trials, in autumn 2024, helped to enhance the programme team's understanding of the vehicle's operational capabilities and to build army-user confidence. They will provide useful guidance to those considering optimal deployment methods for Boxer in the future.

In July and August 2024, Boxer's industry partners delivered

an intensive seven-week training package for the Army Boxer Acceptance Testing Team (ATT), preparing them to carry out future inspections of the vehicle. This training covered all of Boxer's major systems and sub-systems. The ATT now has the all-round technical understanding to conduct thorough acceptance procedures, with the first Boxer vehicles set to go through its inspection in early 2025.

Alongside delivery of the five prototypes, progress was made towards developing future Boxer variants. Preliminary development work has begun on the close support bridging, repair and recovery, and armoured mortar vehicle variants. And it was also announced that the RCH155 variant will meet the British Army's Mobile Fires Platform requirement.

Martyn Williams, Mechanised Infantry Boxer SRO and Director Boxer Strategic Pipeline, said: "2024 was a demanding but exciting delivery year for Boxer on multiple fronts. Despite some delays, it was fantastic to see tangible positive progress with the hugely experienced and dedicated DE&S team driving delivery forward. Alongside the progress with the core programme, further variants remain critical priorities in the Boxer Strategic Pipeline.

David Russell, Mechanised Infantry Boxer DE&S Team Leader, said: "The progress we made last year demonstrates the strength of Boxer's collaborative procurement approach. The DE&S team, spanning all functions, continues to work tirelessly alongside industry partners, Army, OCCAR, the NATO Support and Procurement Agency, and international partners to ensure that the Boxer vehicle and supporting elements deliver a coherent capability. I'm immensely proud of how the entire team and our wider stakeholders have maintained their focus on delivering this vital capability.

Looking ahead to 2025, X Company 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (1RRF) will begin training, as Boxer progresses towards its Initial Operating Capability.

NEWS

Exercise Steadfast Dart readies NATO's Allied Reaction Force

DE&S' logistics experts are supporting the British Army as part of NATO Exercise Steadfast Dart, taking place in January and February 2025.

DE&S is supporting British troops throughout January and February as they spearhead a major NATO exercise named Steadfast Dart. The UK is providing the largest contribution of forces to the exercise, sending over 2,600 personnel and 730 vehicles to NATO's eastern flank.

The purpose of Exercise Steadfast Dart is to hone the deployment of the new Allied Reaction Force, which is designed to rapidly reinforce NATO's eastern borders. The exercise is also showcasing the Alliance's readiness, capability and commitment to defend every inch of its territory.

The UK troops will first split into two groups, one headed to Germany, the other to Greece. Then, in February, they will converge in Romania and Bulgaria, where they will join contingents from 10 allied nations, in a show of unity to coincide with the anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Logistics play a huge part in exercises such as Steadfast Dart, ensuring kit and heavy equipment are moved safely and securely, and arrive when and where they are needed. The DE&S Logistics, Commodities and Services Transformation (LCST) team is supporting British troops throughout Steadfast Dart.

The team is co-ordinating the movement of around 730 Jackal and Foxhound vehicles, as well as weapons, ammunition and fuel. They are also ensuring basics such as ration packs and water are in good supply. A significant amount of equipment is being transported from Scotland, through England and on to Germany and Greece by a fleet of Heavy Equipment Transport vehicles. In addition to this, DE&S teams will be on-call throughout Steadfast Dart

to deal with any issues that might arise, such as engineering support and reacting to requests for vehicle spares and repairs.

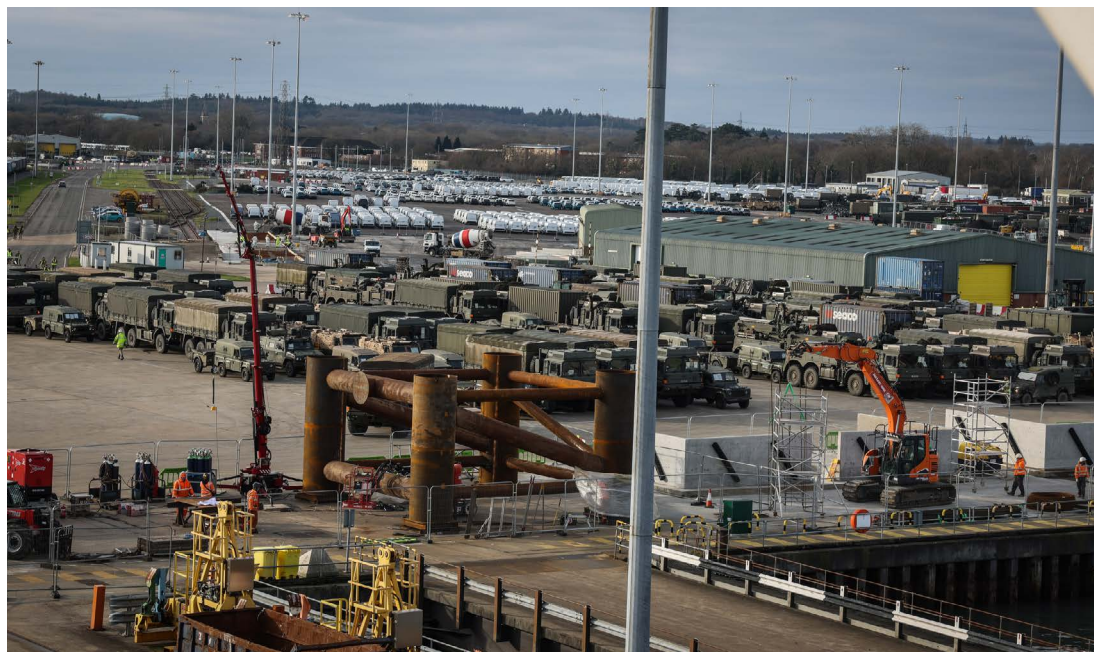
Air Commodore Ange Baker, Head of the DE&S Commissioning and Managing Organisation, said: "Exercise Steadfast Dart is a vital element of the UK's continued commitment to NATO. The LCST programme is proud to support this major exercise on behalf of UK Defence, through the movement of equipment, arms, rations and vehicles. This programme demonstrates excellent collaboration between DE&S and our industry delivery partner Team Leidos, enabling us to achieve operational success for the UK Armed Forces and for our NATO partners."

The ability of NATO to rapidly deploy is reliant on nations being able to seamlessly operate alongside one another. Exercise Steadfast Dart will help improve coordination and cooperation between NATO allies, with a focus on interoperability, particularly in the early phases of deployment.

Minister for the Armed Forces, Luke Pollard MP, said: "This Government wants the UK to be NATO's leading European nation. Exercise Steadfast Dart demonstrates our unshakeable commitment to NATO and highlights the UK key leadership role in the Alliance."

Having high-readiness forces that can operate across land, air and sea in response to emerging threats is a critical component of NATO's defensive plans. The new Allied Reaction Force will not only support the Alliance's defence in times of crisis, it will strengthen deterrence against the UK's adversaries. It will ensure that forces from across the NATO alliance can come together at shorter notice than has ever been possible before.

Luke Pollard added: "As we approach the three-year anniversary of Russia's illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we must continue to strengthen our collective defences together to deter Putin effectively."



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NEWS

British Army trial drone-downing radiofrequency weapon

British Army soldiers have trialled a potentially game-changing energy weapon, designed to down swarms of drones using radio waves.

During recent trials, the Radio Frequency Directed Energy Weapon (RFDEW) demonstrator was able to detect, track and engage a range of land and air threats.

RFDEWs use high-frequency waves to disrupt or damage critical electronic components inside devices such as drones, causing them to be immobilised or fall out of the sky. They are capable of neutralising targets up to 1 km away with near instant effect. And, at an estimated energy cost of less than 10 pence per shot, they could prove to be a cost-effective complement to traditional missile-based air defence systems in the future.

The RFDEW trials took place at MOD training areas in south and west Wales. These trials varied in complexity from static defence against single aerial threats to on-the-move defence against multiple simultaneous threats alongside friendly forces. High-power trials established the necessary operational, support and protection arrangements to enable the Army to fire such weapons in open-air on the MOD estate for the first time.

The demonstrator system was designed to be modular and easily reconfigurable to enable a wide range of potential RFDEW uses. It can be operated dismounted on the ground and can be easily mounted on a standard army vehicle.

While the demonstrator weapon itself will not go into service, the knowledge, experience and data gleaned from the trial will inform future directed energy requirements for the UK.

The demonstrator weapon was developed by a Thales UK-led consortium, which includes sub-contractors QinetiQ, Teledyne e2v and Horiba Mira. They were awarded the contract by Team Hersa through Project Ealing, a joint DE&S and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) enterprise. Developing the demonstrator supported up to 135 jobs in the UK.

A spokesperson for DE&S' RFDEW team said: "The team is working closely with UK Armed Forces, Dstl and industry partners, using engineering, management and commercial expertise to deliver directed energy weapons into service and secure a crucial advantage against emerging threats."

Their high level of automation means RFDEW systems can be operated by a single person and could be mounted on to a military vehicle, such as a MAN SV, to provide mobility.

Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry Maria Eagle said: "The successful firing by British soldiers of our Radio Frequency Directed Energy Weapon is another step forward for a potentially game-changing sovereign weapon for the UK. It's great

to see defence experts and industry working collaboratively to put cutting-edge equipment in the hands of our Armed Forces."

Nigel MacVean, Managing Director of Thales Integrated Airspace-protection Systems, said: "I am thrilled with the successful RFDEW firing trials. Thales has been at the forefront of this pioneering technology for over 40 years and our continued research and development in this sector, along with our partners in Government, paves the way for a strong future in this field."

Project Ealing will continue to enable further development and experimentation, while Team Hersa continues to work with operators to develop RFDEW requirements, doctrine and technology, shaping the next generation of mission-optimised energy weapons.



NEWS

Contracts for 30,000 new drones for Ukraine placed

In a boost to European security, DE&S places £45 million worth of contracts with five companies to deliver tens of thousands of drones to Ukraine.

DE&S has placed £45 million worth of contracts that will see 30,000 state-of-the-art first-person view drones sent to Ukraine, allowing the country's armed forces to manoeuvre past Russian air defences and target enemy positions and armoured vehicles.

Working on behalf of the UK and Latvia-led International Drone Capability Coalition, DE&S ran competitions to select the most capable industry partners to manufacture the drones before placing orders with five companies. First-person view drones have proven highly effective since Russia's full-scale invasion began, providing Ukrainian operators with situational awareness to target enemy positions, vehicles and ships with explosive ordnance.

The International Drone Capability Coalition supports Ukraine with uncrewed surveillance and attack capabilities. Funding for the new drones comes from the UK, Denmark, Latvia, the Netherlands and Sweden. The Coalition aims to produce these drones at scale and at an affordable price point, leveraging the strength of its members defence industries.

Michelle Sanders, DE&S Deputy Director Operations, said: "As has been frequently demonstrated on the battlefields of Ukraine, the capability provided by first-person view drones is invaluable. I'm extremely proud of the part played by the Operations Team and the wider DE&S in enabling this truly international effort to deliver such vital equipment.

Defence Secretary John Healey announced this milestone alongside Latvian Defence Minister Andris Sprūds at a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group held at Ramstein Air Base in Germany on 9 January.

The Defence Secretary said: "I am proud of the UK's leadership in supporting Ukraine. From heading coalitions which are delivering essential equipment alongside allies, to training recruits, we're standing strong with Ukraine against Putin's aggression.

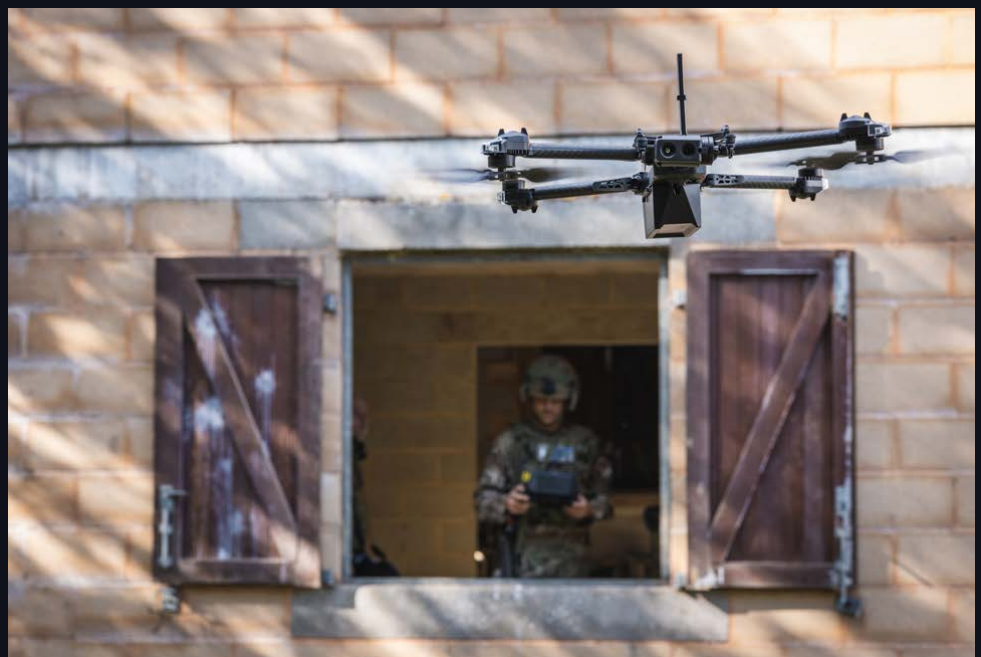
Our commitment to provide £3 billion a year of military aid for as long as it takes will ensure Ukraine

can defend themselves and is essential to protect the security of the UK – because the defence of the UK starts in Ukraine.

This follows the UK's £7.5 million investment in the Drone Capability Coalition's Common Fund, set out in November, and brings the UK's total investment in the fund to £15 million. So far, the fund has raised around £73 million.

Alongside this, the Defence Secretary confirmed that the UK administered International Fund for Ukraine now stands at over £1.3 billion, of which the UK has contributed £500 million. The Fund uses financial contributions from international partners to rapidly procure priority military equipment for Ukraine. In a further sign of the strength of international support for Ukraine, more than £190 million of extra funding has been committed to the International Fund for Ukraine, with Portugal and Germany contributing for the first time.

Since taking office in July, the Government has stepped up international leadership, demonstrating its ironclad support and committing to £3 billion of military support to Ukraine every year for as long as it takes. In October, an extra £2.26 billion of support was announced, using the profits from seized Russian assets.



NEWS

Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry visits DE&S' Defence Fulfilment Centre

Maria Eagle travelled to MOD Donnington, in Telford, to see DE&S' cutting-edge logistics hub and RBSL's Hadley Castle Works facility.

Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry Maria Eagle has paid her first visit to the DE&S-run Defence Fulfilment Centre (DFC), based at MOD Donnington in Telford.

Operated by industry partner Team Leidos, the cutting-edge, end-to-end logistics centre is a hub for the storage of the UK's defence inventory ensuring the efficient delivery of critical equipment and supplies across the globe. This includes clothing, medicines and many other essential items needed by front-line personnel.

Touring the facility, which employs close to 400 staff, the Minister experienced how the DFC supports the UK's Armed Forces. It is one of two major storage and distribution locations for the MOD, alongside another at MOD Bicester. A new facility at Longtown in Cumbria is currently nearing completion.

The Minister also found out more about the Logistics Commodities Services Transformation (LCST) programme, of which the DFC is a key element. Since 2015, the programme has delivered over £1 billion worth of products to the UK military.

John Farrow, DE&S Logistics, Services and Commodities Director, said: "We welcomed the opportunity to demonstrate the logistical effort that goes into the management and delivery of the UK's defence inventory from our MOD Donnington Defence Fulfilment Centre. We are proud to have showcased the work we do to contribute to the continued prosperity and security of our nation and our allies."

While at the DFC, the Minister was shown the Leidos Support Chain Integration Platform IT Service in action. The platform's best-in-class technology enables the delivery, inventory management, storage, transport management, demand placement

and supply chain orchestration of military kit in a way that reduces costs and improves distribution accuracy.

Simon Hutchings, Leidos Vice President Logistics and Mission Support and Programme Manager LCST, said: "I am immensely proud of what Leidos has achieved to date on the development of the Defence Fulfilment Centre and as the prime integrator for LCST. The flexible capacity and strategic network resilience we've established have significantly bolstered defence resilience and enhanced our ability to support war-fighters with better, more agile adaptive logistics."

On the same day, the Minister also visited the nearby Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL) Hadley Castle Works factory, where she met defence staff working on DE&S-managed programmes for the Challenger 3 and Boxer armoured vehicles. The Hadley Castle Works factory is involved in producing the Challenger 3 main battle tank, a vital component of the British Army's modernisation efforts.

Under an £800 million contract, Challenger 3 production has generated nearly 300 highly skilled jobs within RBSL, including 130 engineers and 70 technicians, with an additional 450 roles supported across the UK supply chain.

Minister Eagle said: "Telford is at the heart of UK Defence, and I was pleased to witness how our defence industry is equipping the Armed Forces with 21st century armoured fighting vehicles. In the face of global threats, the upcoming Defence Industrial Strategy will drive economic growth, boost British jobs, and strengthen national security."

The Defence Industrial Strategy underlines the Government's commitment to forging long-term partnerships with the defence industry. The strategy will ensure economic growth, regional prosperity and resilience by supporting skilled jobs and apprenticeships while meeting the Industrial Strategy's broader goals, such as Net Zero and national security.



NEWS

DE&S apprentice wins prestigious engineering award

Desider met with George Fryer, a DE&S Aerospace Degree Apprentice, who has been named the Institution of Mechanical Engineers' EngTech of the Year 2024.

DE&S is well-known for its sector-leading apprentice and graduate schemes, which provide an important pipeline of talent into UK Defence. The DE&S Entry Talent Centre of Expertise currently manages around 500 apprentices and graduates across 13 schemes, ranging from project managers to engineers, and app developers to supply chain specialists.

DE&S' engineering apprentices are involved in developing and running their scheme and have opportunities to support outreach activities through marketing, careers and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) events.

In 2023 and 2024, DE&S' apprentice and graduate schemes were shortlisted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, which recognised them as some of the best on offer in the UK.

What did you do to win the award?

In the application form on the Institution of Mechanical Engineers' website I wrote about my professional journey as something of a 'career apprentice'. I have spent much of my professional life as an apprentice, first with the RAF and now in DE&S. I talked about my extensive STEM outreach activities, where I use DE&S volunteering time in tandem with my own time to recount my engineering journey to students, parents and carers. I enjoy pushing myself out of my comfort zone, and STEM outreach really allows me to never get too comfortable in what I'm doing, to always find new experiences and new ways of thinking about problems.

What project or programme were you working on?

I was on a six-month placement with the engineering team in the Air Commodities delivery team. The main focus of my work was supporting the desk officer with the management of armour capable flotation devices – essentially a life preserver that has provision to slide armour plating into the jacket. The Air Commodities Delivery team is a fantastic placement and I had the opportunity to work on a variety of other pieces of equipment too.

What did your role involve?

As an early careers engineer I had a diverse and varied role to give me an overview of what life as an Engineering Authority desk officer would be like. This included the development of equipment technical documents used to carry out preventative and routine maintenance, and assurance activities like compliance reviews and assistance with the development of the equipment safety assessment reports. I also had the chance to take part in practical activities including equipment trials and proof of installations.

What do you most enjoy about the Aerospace Degree Apprentice scheme?

Like a lot of engineers, I enjoy problem solving. This could be through implementing processes to mitigate ongoing problems or finding solutions to new issues. These solutions will often be found by communicating with professional and knowledgeable stakeholders. I take great joy from soaking up all the experiences and learning from a broad range of colleagues.

How does it feel to be recognised with this award?

This has been a fantastic recognition. It has really instilled a self belief that I can achieve great things whatever I am doing.



NEWS

Ships design partnering: Helping set up maritime projects for success

The Ships Naval Design Partnering initiative is building success into future Royal Navy projects through collaboration and innovation in the pre-concept and concept phases.

It is often said that projects don't end wrong; they start wrong. This is why setting up projects for success from day one is so important.

Ships Naval Design Partnering (NDP) is providing the Royal Navy with insights and support to inform decision-making during the pre-concept and concept phases. By delivering high-quality feasibility studies and cost-modelling of maritime capabilities, Ships NDP helps to ensure Royal Navy projects are well-founded and set up for success.

A Navy capability sponsor – responsible for managing the pre-concept activities for a maritime platform – can deploy Ships NDP to establish key capability requirements and so set realistic targets for the concept phase. Ships NDP undertakes pre-concept design tasks and commissions studies, including indicative designs, associated cost modelling and research into innovative system features that could impact ship design.

Each year, the DE&S-led initiative establishes a combined MOD and industry core team to deliver a programme of individual projects. A prime contractor provides programme management and principal engineers, and maintains a framework of suppliers which the team is sourced from.

The core team is selected from the framework through a competitive tasking process built to be as straight-forward and open as possible. This allows Ships NDP to support a robust, diverse UK maritime supply chain, which includes entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs.

Once the team is established, representatives from each organisation and company gather together at NDP's headquarters in central Bristol to work alongside the MOD's project sponsors.

Setting up the core team in a single location and creating a psychologically safe environment creates an effective incubator and engenders a collaborative spirit, which promotes innovative approaches to problem solving.

A preliminary design rendering of the Multi-Role Strike Ship, produced by Ships NDP.



Ships NDP have successfully supported a number of programmes, including the Type 26 and Type 31 frigates. In 2023 and 2024, Ships NDP brought together a multidisciplinary team to develop indicative designs and cost-modelling for the Royal Navy's Multi-Role Strike Ship (MRSS) programme. The team included a broad range of companies, from all tiers, ranging from SMEs to Primes, working in close collaboration.

Steven Conneely, DE&S NDP team leader, said: "We are committed to working with innovative and disruptive technologies throughout the supply chain to deliver lower costs and higher quality goods and services. We drive collaboration throughout the supply chain, and a fair and responsible approach to working with supply chain partners to deliver the contract."

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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.

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NEWS

DE&S delivery highlights

A digest of DE&S project news from the past month.

RAF's advanced fighter pilot helmet receives £133 million investment boost

The Eurofighter consortium – made up of Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK – has awarded BAE Systems a £133 million contract to further develop its Striker II helmet-mounted display (HMD). The Striker II HMD is one of the world's most advanced. It uses the latest technology to integrate a daylight readable colour display with an all-digital night vision system.

BAE Systems is already developing Striker II under a £40 million contract, which will see the HMD undergo flight trials in the coming months. The latest investment will fund the next stage of its development, ensuring the HMD is production-ready.

The contract is expected to secure more than 200 high-skilled jobs at the company's Combat Air Facility in Lancashire and its Electronic Systems site in Kent, which specialises in developing HMDs.

Gary Williams, DE&S Typhoon Striker II Project Manager, said: "Striker II promises to provide pilots with enhanced situational awareness, which is proven to be critical to mission success in complex and congested operational environments. This latest investment in the next-generation Striker II helmet means that we, alongside our international allies, can continue to develop this innovative equipment."

Military boost to Ukraine front-line will support UK growth and jobs

A Yorkshire-based defence company will begin the production of barrels for the first time in almost two decades, as the UK ramps up its military supplies to Ukraine in 2025. DE&S has placed a £61 million contract with BAE Systems to produce the barrel forgings. The barrels will be produced by Yorkshire-based Sheffield Forgemasters before being sent to Ukraine for finishing and integration. This is the first time in almost two decades that

Sheffield Forgemasters will produce barrels for artillery guns.

In addition, Gravehawk, a UK-designed air defence system, procured by DE&S on behalf of the International Fund for Ukraine, has been rapidly developed to meet Ukrainian needs on the battlefield. The innovative system, which is the size of a shipping container, is able to retrofit air-air missiles for ground-based air defence, meaning it can use Ukrainian missiles already in their Armed Forces' possession. Two prototypes of the air defence capability system were tested in Ukraine in September, and a further 15 will follow this year.

Design for uncrewed maritime aircraft prototype unveiled

The design for the Proteus technology demonstrator aircraft has been unveiled, bringing the Royal Navy a step closer to operating crewless aircraft. Proteus is being designed and developed under a £60 million contract with industry partner Leonardo, working with DE&S' Future Capability Innovation team and the Royal Navy.

The three-tonne demonstrator aircraft will function as a test bed for the development and demonstration of advances in uncrewed air systems in the maritime environment. The Proteus design features a modular payload bay giving it the ability to transport different types of cargo. This could mean greater flexibility in mission roles, including the ability to trade fuel capacity for increased mission payload. Providing commanders in the field with a wide range of options from a single platform is both operationally useful and delivers value for money by avoiding the need for multiple fleets of aircraft.

Leonardo is also experimenting with the application of new digital manufacturing technologies in rotor-craft production that require fewer manufacturing stages in the production of parts, including 3D printing and the use of cost-effective low temperature cure composite materials.



NEWS

DE&S staff named in King's New Year Honours list

Dedicated DE&S and UK Defence people have been recognised in the 2025 King's New Year Honours list.



Bradley Parry

DE&S staff and colleagues from across the UK defence enterprise have received honours for their outstanding service to Defence, including crucial contributions made in the areas of logistics, capability and military communications.

The New Year Honours list rewards people for exceptional achievements, merit, service and bravery. They are awarded by King Charles III to deserving and high-achieving people from every area of UK life.

Chief Technician Bradley Parry, who works as an Integrated Logistic Support Engineer in the DE&S Typhoon Delivery Team, has been made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE). Bradley is responsible for ensuring that a wide-range of Typhoon upgrades are developed and delivered with a full support solution. Bradley is very active in the Armed Forces volunteer community, mentoring school leavers and peers, and supporting current service personnel. He also volunteers for the Shout Mental Health Crisis Line, helping people manage current crises and signposting to ongoing support services.

Bradley said: "I am deeply honoured and humbled to have been awarded an MBE. It is a privilege to be part of such a prestigious community and I am truly grateful for the opportunities I have had to contribute to causes that are close to my heart. I remain committed to doing my best to make a positive difference and continue to contribute in any way that I can."

Dave Corfield, who recently retired from BAE Systems after four decades, has also been made an MBE, in recognition for his services to defence aviation. Dave joined BAE Systems as an apprentice and, during the course of his 46 year career, made a number of significant contributions to the Air domain. Most recently, Dave was the CEO of BAE Systems subsidiary Prismatic, where he led the team developing an uncrewed, solar-powered aircraft.

In response to receiving the MBE, Dave said: "I'm both surprised and humbled to receive such an honour. It's been a privilege to



Dave Corfield

work with some incredible people across BAE Systems and the wider defence industry and I'm so grateful for the opportunities I've had during my career."

Petra Oyston, a Fellow at the Defence Science Technology Laboratory, has been made an OBE for her ground-breaking work leading the development of the UK's engineering and synthetic biology research, focusing on disruptive innovations that enhance the UK Armed Forces' capabilities.

After the honours were announced, DE&S CEO Andy Start said: "I am always proud of our people, but it is a source of extra pride to see our military and civilian staff recognised in the New Year Honours list. Equipping our armed forces with the edge to protect our nation is at the heart of what we do and to be recognised in this way is no less than they deserve. A huge congratulations to all."

Military medals and commendations have also been awarded to the following DE&S staff:

The Meritorious Service Medal (MSM)

Warrant Officer Class One Paul Hurton (British Army) – Integrated Logistics Support Manager, DE&S Ajax Delivery Team

Warrant Officer Jacqueline Henderson-Bowyer (RAF) – Operations Manager, DE&S Air ISTAR Delivery Team

Joint Commander's Commendations (JCC)

Major Richard Graham (British Army) – Military Assistant to DE&S Director Strategic Capability, Engagement and Operations

Commander SJC (UK) Commendation

Major Anthony Francis (British Army) – Equipment Support Manager, DE&S Land Combat Vehicles Delivery Team

PEOPLE

Jo Litten

Job title

Corporate Business Partner for the Director of Professions, Policy and Portfolio Office (D3PO)

What does your role involve?

The role of the Corporate Business Partner is to work alongside the areas of the business, in my case the D3PO area, and make sure teams there have the right business support for everything to run smoothly, effectively and efficiently. My tasks can include governance, events, communications, developing the business plan for the area, strategic alignment, and working with the Leadership, Corporate, Infrastructure and Security teams.

What do you most enjoy about your job?

The thing I find most rewarding about this job is the opportunity to build networks and collaborate with people from all over DE&S. That collaboration gives me a chance to see new perspectives, expand my horizons and really broaden my understanding of our organisation.

What is your greatest accomplishment to date?

Last November I took on the role of Poppy Appeal Organiser for DE&S' Abbey Wood Headquarters. It was my first time leading a great team of volunteers, who gave their time to run the poppy stall and help with the on-site Remembrance event. We raised over £4,000 through the stall. I was given the privilege of laying a wreath during the service. Representing all my civil service colleagues at that event was a personal high point.

What keeps you energised about working at DE&S?

I enjoy the challenge of no two days being the same; it keeps me on my toes and really stretches the grey matter! I find it very rewarding to be able to see the results of my actions and to figure out ways to improve things and make a positive difference for my colleagues.

Who or what has shaped who you are?

This will sound very corny but the biggest influence on my life is my son. He is 16 and very keen to join the RAF as a career. The whole ethos of DE&S really hits a different note now when I consider that, in just a few years, he might be flying in a helicopter or a plane we were responsible for procuring and maintaining. It brings a very personal slant to the work we do here and a real connection to the front-line personnel we serve.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

In my spare time I'm involved with the RAF Cadets as a Civilian Instructor and with a local primary school as the Chair of Governors. Both roles come with a flood of mandatory training, but despite that I enjoy the different challenges each brings.

What might surprise people about you?

I am a massive Doctor Who fan. It was a regular Saturday tea-time event to watch with my dad as a kid and I still love it.

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

Always try to be nice, but never fail to be kind." I like to think it encourages a genuine, compassionate approach to those around us, which can have a positive and profound impact on our relationships and those around us.





A member of the Armed Forces of Ukraine uses a compact landmine prodder to detect landmines during Explosive Ordnance Disposal training provided by the UK as part of Operation Interflex.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry Maria Eagle visits the Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land manufacturing facility in Telford, where the Boxer and Challenger 3 main battle tank are being produced.

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