

# DESIDER

AN INSIDE LOOK AT DEFENCE EQUIPMENT & SUPPORT



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



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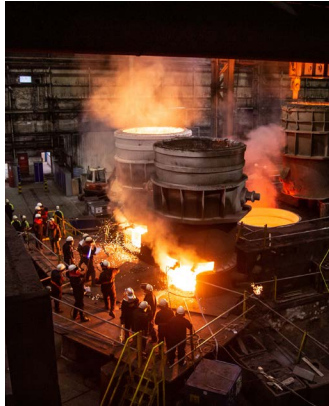


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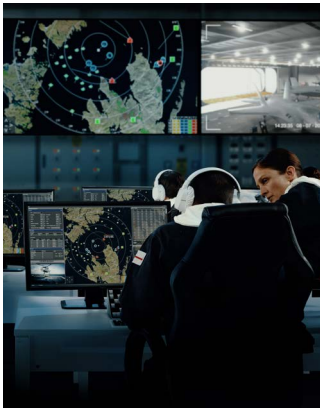
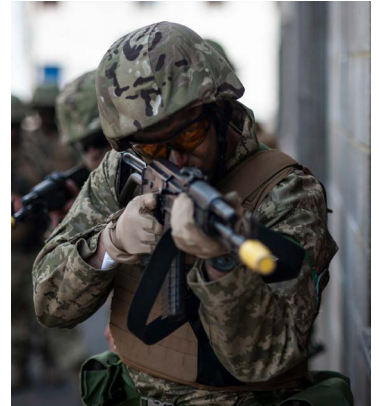


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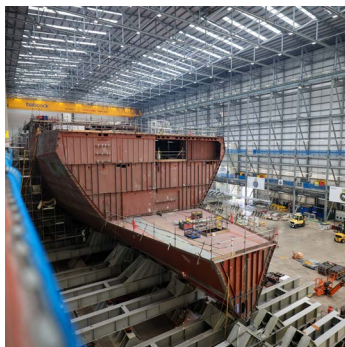


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# START Talking

**This month marks three years since Russia began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In the face of the terrible human cost and the destruction of their country, the courage, determination and bravery of the Ukrainian people have surpassed all expectations.**

Ukraine's victories are theirs and theirs alone, but we should be immensely proud of the unwavering support that the UK and our allies have given them. I want to thank everyone across UK Defence who has given their time and energy to support Ukraine, from our distribution centres to our front-line and industry partners, and all our colleagues in the MOD, in NATO and beyond.

For three years, we have worked hard to deliver battle-winning, life-saving equipment to Ukraine's Armed Forces, so they can continue the fight to liberate their country. The numbers are staggering: around 56 million items delivered, a total spend in the billions and over 51,000 Ukrainian troops trained and kitted out. The last three years have shown the mighty impact we can have when we pull together as One Defence. The UK Government has made it clear that our nation's security starts in Ukraine. Under Prime Minister Starmer and Defence Secretary Healey, the UK is standing should-to-shoulder with Ukraine. This year we will give more military support to Ukraine than ever before, with £4.5 billion already committed. Earlier in February, the Defence Secretary announced a £150 million military aid package and an extra £20 million to improve the medical facilities for wounded personnel.

Even as we've stood with Ukraine, we have continued to support the UK's Armed Forces. Working with our defence enterprise partners, we have delivered at an unprecedented pace and scale, including millions of items of inventory each month and over 600 modernisation programmes. And, with the Prime Minister's recent commitment to increase defence spending, as well as the upcoming release of the Strategic Defence Review, we will see the modernisation of the UK's Armed Forces accelerate.

The UK is matching procurement investment with efficiency reforms to make every pound go further. We are weeks away from realising the first stages of the MOD Defence Reform programme. The Permanent Secretary, the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Chief of Defence Nuclear

will join a new National Armaments Director (NAD) as the MOD's senior leadership quad. Together, their stronger accountability, oversight and alignment will drive Defence forward and is projected to help create billions in savings over the next decade.

A nation's armed forces are only as strong as the industry supporting them. With responsibility for the defence acquisition system, the NAD will deliver a new approach to procurement, changing how the UK engages with industry and drives economic growth. The NAD will focus on delivering the Defence Industrial Strategy, creating more defence jobs across the UK and increasing British exports.

I'm committed to ensuring the new NAD role is a success, and to supporting their work once they have been recruited. Our new operating model, which will soon reach full operating capacity, positions DE&S to support the NAD and to deliver more of what matters to the UK Armed Forces, at the speed and scale needed, and with open communication and whole-enterprise collaboration hard-wired into it.

The conflict in Ukraine sent shockwaves through global supply chains and brought war to NATO's eastern border. It has made a compelling case for greater cross-NATO industrial coordination and integration. The work of NATO's Ukraine Defence Contact Group, which the UK chaired earlier in February, and the Conference of National Armaments Directors are crucial to doing more to develop, procure and deliver together.

Having visited Kyiv multiple times in the past two years, I can say with first-hand certainly how important our support is, both militarily and for the morale of our Ukrainian allies. Today, the war in Ukraine rages on. Russia continues to indiscriminately target civilians and terrorise a nation. The resolve of the Ukrainian people remains an inspiration.

While we have made our best efforts, the global defence environment is changing at such a rapid pace that certain elements of this column and this edition might be out of date by the time you read them.

One thing that won't have changed and cannot be stated too often: the UK is standing with Ukraine, now and for as long as it takes. And DE&S will continue to play its part.

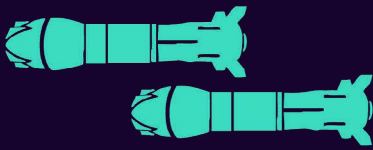
# UK Defence delivering for Ukraine

## 2022 - 2025

DE&S has supported the provision of nearly **£7.8 billion** in military aid

DE&S has delivered over **56 million** individual items

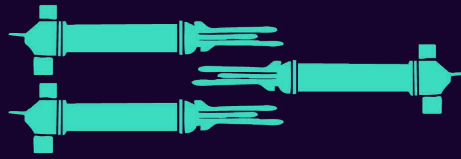
### Lethal Aid



Over 12,000

#### Anti-tank weapons

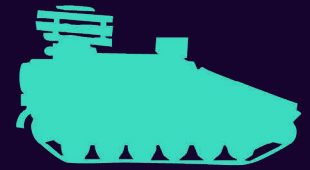
Including over 5,000 NLAW missiles



Over 1,800

#### Air defence missiles

Including Starstreak high-velocity and Martlet lightweight multi-role missiles



Over 100

#### Air Defence Systems

Including anti-air guns and Stormer vehicles fitted with Starstreak launchers



Over 10,000,000

#### Rounds of ammunition

Various calibres, including 500,000 artillery rounds



Over 1,000

#### Armoured, protected and logistics vehicles

Including a squadron of 14 Challenger 2 tanks



Over 10,000

#### Uncrewed systems (land, sea and air)

Including: aerial platforms, surface vessels, maritime ISR vessels and underwater vehicles

### Non-lethal aid and training



Over 94,000

#### Body armour and helmets

Including over 12,000 sets body armour and 82,000 helmets



Over 25,000

#### Extreme cold weather clothing

Including hats, gloves and other gear



Over 51,000

#### Personnel trained

Since June 2022, the UK has trained over 51,000 Ukrainian personnel through Operation Interflex

FEATURE

## SENIOR LEADER COMMENT

# How UK Defence has delivered for Ukraine

**As Ukraine passes the grim milestone of three years since Russia launched its full-scale invasion, Major General Anna-Lee Reilly CB FREng reflects on the difference DE&S and its defence industry partners have made.**



**It has been three years since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and during that time DE&S has been at the forefront of the UK's support to the Armed Forces of Ukraine.**

Since February 2022, under the auspices of Taskforce Kindred, Taskforce Hirst, the International Fund for Ukraine and Operation Interflex, 33 delivery teams across DE&S have completed over 2,000 delivery tasks, delivering some of the largest, fastest, most complex procurement activity in our history.

DE&S has supported the provision of nearly £7.8 billion in military aid and delivered over 56 million individual items to Ukraine. This includes 10,000 air defence weapons to protect Ukraine's cities and people, and nearly 10,000 uncrewed aerial systems, which have proven so effective in their fight.

Alongside this, we have supplied over two million rounds of artillery and small arms ammunition, and an array of non-lethal aid, from medical packs to tented camps, body armour and respirators. In the first year of our support, DE&S delivered the greatest road movement of ammunition across Europe since the Second World War.

None of this could have been done without the hard work and dedication of teams in the wider MOD and our defence contractors, who have been outstanding. From large Primes to hundreds of small and medium-sized enterprises – this has been a whole defence enterprise effort.

Much of my time over the last year has been taken up with Taskforce Hirst, which aims to strengthen UK and Ukraine defence-industrial cooperation. Through Hirst, the UK Government is working with British and Ukrainian defence industries to develop and strengthen the country's industrial base and deliver capability. Notable projects include a contract with BAE Systems who have partnered with a Ukrainian company and Sheffield Forgemasters to produce 155mm and 105mm artillery barrels. This is creating much needed capability and developing domestic Ukrainian capacity, while reinvigorating barrel production in the UK, which is vital for our own armed forces.

However, I am most proud of our work supporting the Renovator programme. This is a NATO funded project to increase Ukraine-based rehabilitation for its defenders by rebuilding and equipping Ukrainian hospitals; an exceptionally worthy cause.

The last three years have been a rollercoaster. We have witnessed the terrible human cost of this war, and seen the very best and sadly the very worst of humanity. Throughout, DE&S and our defence industry partners have been at the centre of efforts to deliver the capabilities that keep Ukraine in the fight.

The fierce courage of the Ukrainian people continues to inspire the world.

To those of you who have contributed in some way to the breadth and depth of the support we have given to our Ukrainian allies, thank you. Your efforts have saved many lives and given much hope for the future.

**Slava Ukraini!**

*Read more about Taskforce Hirst on page 9 and about Operation Interflex on page 10.*



*Maj Gen Anna-Lee Reilly receives the Order of Merit from President Zelenskyy.*

## FEATURE

# The power of industrial deterrence

**James Gavin, DE&S Head of Future Capability Innovation, makes the case for the UK's strong industrial deterrent.**

## Industrial deterrence is real and alive as part of the UK's defence posture.

While 'deterrence' is a familiar phrase to those who work in Defence, its industrial aspect might not be. But an adversary can be deterred from taking action because a nation's military industrial complex is so great that they cannot hope to match it. Or tempted to do so because they think that nation's industrial capacity can be overwhelmed.

The UK has a strong, proud industrial heritage. Our country is dotted with museums paying homage to the industrial revolution and the home-front efforts of the World Wars; to the ingenuity and risks taken by entrepreneurs, and to the skills and the hard graft of our workers.

Military historians often reflect that prior to the First and Second World Wars, our adversaries underestimated the continued ability of the UK to ramp up defence industrial production. In both cases, they were proven wrong, but only after our deterrent failed.

As a nation, we have shown time and again our ability to rapidly switch from civil to military production, leveraging cross-sector technology, and innovating at pace and scale. It is not just traditional defence companies who make a strategic difference to the UK's industrial deterrence, it is also our wider civilian sector and our small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Perhaps we need to be louder and prouder in trumpeting our strengths?

In modern times we have become a largely services-based economy. So it is easy to forget that the UK still has a strong manufacturing base – one of the strongest in the world – with a fantastic skills base backed by entrepreneurs who, when the opportunity arises, can combine both to create innovative new enterprises.

Readers of Desider will note that the British Army is re-equipping with advanced armoured vehicles and battle tanks; the Royal Navy with new frigates and soon support vessels; and the RAF with new generations of fighter aircraft. All of these are major programmes, which only a top-tier nation could aspire to bring to the table.

What of other areas? What of the SMEs and that entrepreneurial spirit?

For an example of their impact, we can look to the war in the Ukraine, where one-way attack drones and one-way attack boats have been used to great impact. The latter have been used by the Ukrainians to defeat a far more powerful Russian navy. Small First Person View (FPV) drones, used to find and strike adversaries, have emerged as a battle-winning new military capability. Cheap, effective and scalable.



In this area, UK Defence, working directly with the UK's supply chain and through the Drone Capability Coalition (DCC) have run several competitions to deliver new drones to Ukraine. These have used variants of the 3-2-1 method, where an outcome focused ask is put forward to industry, with the intent to fund three companies to minimum viable product, then two companies to minimum viable capability, then one company to scale. SMEs won nearly all the competitions.

And we have only just started to tap into our SME ecosystem, stimulated by the UK's unwavering support for the Ukraine.

The message here for our adversaries is: 'If we need to scale, at pace and by orders of magnitude, we can.' The story is the same across other areas where we have run competitions and begun fielding new novel capabilities. History can, and is, repeating itself.

The lesson from history is we need to ensure that our adversaries do not underestimate our industrial strength.

The UK's capacity for industrial deterrence is real, and our adversaries should take note. If we need to, we can switch at pace and scale into war-winning defence production. It's up to all of us to make sure they hear that message.

***In March, James will be speaking at DPRTE 2025.***

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## FEATURE

# Strengthening supply chains in a time of crisis

**Recent events have exposed supply chain vulnerabilities across a range of sectors, including Defence, says the International Institute for Strategic Studies' Tom Waldwyn. Any approach to address these comes with trade-offs to be carefully considered.**

**The below represents the views of the author and not of Desider, DE&S or the UK Ministry of Defence.**

In 2020, governments and businesses were made painfully aware of the vulnerabilities in their supply chains as COVID-19 led to lockdowns, business closures and price rises. Two years later, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine and soon after blocked gas exports to European customers, sending prices spiralling, exerting great pressure on defence ministry finances and negatively affecting their suppliers. Countries soon concluded that they had an 'over-reliance' on certain countries for materials. When China halted the export of gallium, germanium and antimony to the US in December 2024, such fears were confirmed.

NATO members and their defence industries are working on measures to reduce such vulnerability or eliminate it entirely. One of these is building stockpiles, particularly of ammunition and critical materials. France, for example, budgeted €16 billion in its most recent military planning law (2024-30) for munitions. Similarly, Lithuania has increased the share of its budget going towards defence stockpiling to 18 percent. In industry, MBDA has increased its stockpiles of electronics and certain metals, including titanium, to ensure production can continue in the event of supply shocks. Changing the shape of defence-relevant supply chains, however, is more complicated and expensive.

Much of the effort consists of bringing stages of the production process within national borders. A raft of countries, including Denmark and Hungary, have announced plans to start domestic production of ammunition. Below this stage of manufacturing, countries are seeking to build greater resilience by producing significant materials themselves. The UK Government's acquisition of the Newton Aycliffe semiconductor factory in 2024 and European energetic materials company Eurencos plans to restart explosive powder production in France are examples of this. This also extends to the discovery and extraction of critical minerals, with deposits recently found in the US and Sweden that could prove beneficial to defence production.

That there are limits to solely national initiatives has also been recognised, and this underpins a more collaborative approach. Since 2022, the EU has launched schemes to incentivise joint defence procurement by member states and reduce supply chain dependencies. These include the European Critical Raw Materials Act, which, among other things, aims to increase research on alternative materials and expedite extraction of critical minerals. NATO meanwhile endorsed the Defence-Critical Supply Chain Security Roadmap in mid-2024 with five

lines of effort including identifying key strategic materials and sharing supply chain assessments. Smaller groups of countries, such as Finland and Sweden, have also signalled their intent to cooperate further on security of supply. A further significant example came in December 2023 when the US designated Australia and the UK as eligible for Defense Production Act funds, perhaps an example of 'friend-shoring'.

These initiatives require an examination of the trade-offs in each approach. Which processes and materials are the most significant? NATO has already begun to answer this question by publishing a list of 12 defence-critical raw materials, including graphite and aluminium. But how should other critical raw materials be assessed? What level of risk are countries willing to tolerate? Is it enough to simply diversify supply away from a riskier supplier? If a capability is assessed as highly critical, is there sufficient domestic demand to make establishing a national capability economically viable? How do countries balance their environmental regulations with a need to extract raw materials more quickly?

With no indication that the global security environment will improve in the near-to-medium term, governments and industry will have to consider these questions to ensure that effective outcomes can be achieved as quickly as possible.





## FEATURE

# The taskforce enabling Ukraine's future strength and prosperity

Through Taskforce Hirst, DE&S and its partners are supporting Ukraine's defence-industrial capacity.

**While delivering vital equipment and support, the UK is also strengthening its defence-industrial cooperation with Ukraine, helping them rebuild their military and economic foundations to secure a safe and prosperous future.**

Led in DE&S by Major General Anna-Lee Reilly CB FREng, DE&S Director of Strategic Capability, Engagement and Operations, Taskforce Hirst is taking the UK's relationship with Ukraine beyond the direct provision of lethal and non-lethal aid, and the training of personnel. The taskforce aims to develop sustainable long-term relationships and joint ventures with Ukrainian industry that will help to restore and modernise their industrial base, while strengthening and deepening the UK's strategic defence partnership with Ukraine.

Hirst brings together colleagues from the MOD, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the Department for Business and Trade, along with representatives from defence companies and trade bodies.

Major General Reilly said: "As part of a wider UK Government and industrial commitment, DE&S is helping the UK build an enduring partnership with Ukraine. With our support, British and Ukrainian companies are working together to enhance Ukraine's defence industrial capacity to deliver mission-winning defence systems, opening up opportunities for the UK defence industry."

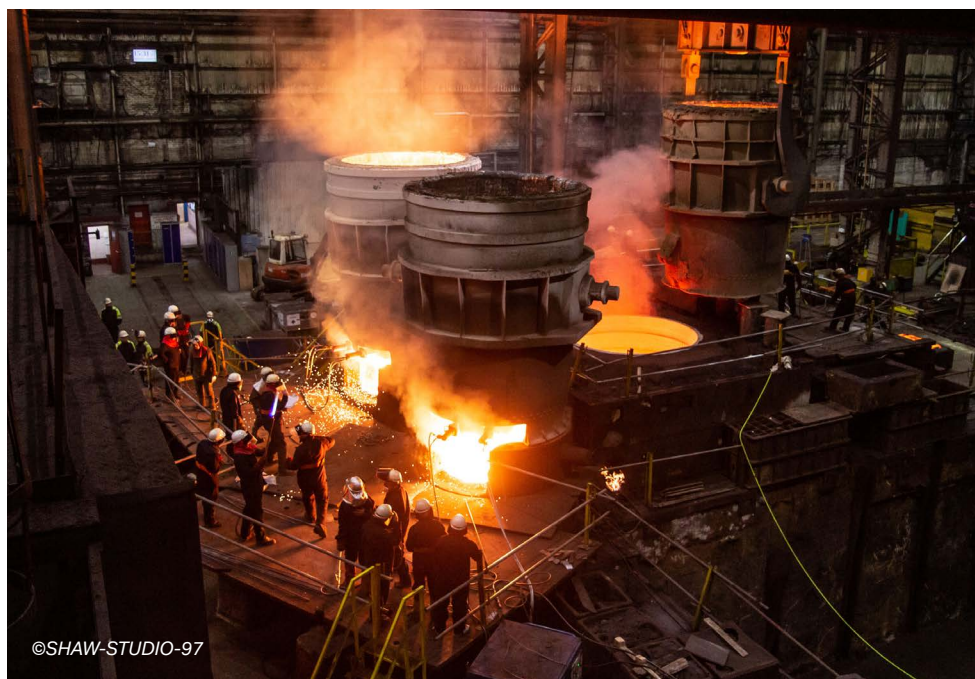
In July 2024, Defence Secretary John Healey and Defence Minister Rustem Umerov signed the Defence Export Support Treaty to operationalise the cooperation. Uniquely, this enables the UK MOD to contract directly on Ukraine's behalf and gives Ukraine access to £3.5 billion worth of export finance guarantees to support its war effort. This is designed to provide a clear demand signal to the British and Ukrainian defence industries and, as far as possible, directly help Ukraine repair, maintain and produce their own defence capabilities.

There were four cross-government Taskforce Hirst trade missions to Ukraine in 2024. These included Ministers, senior colleagues from

across Government and partners from key UK and international defence firms. They have been very successful in kick-starting crucial UK-Ukrainian defence industry relationships and identifying investment opportunities for longer-term mutual collaboration. In February 2025, the taskforce delivered its first international joint trade mission with the Netherlands and Norway. Led by Minister for the Armed Forces Luke Pollard, the trade delegation met with Ukrainian ministers, officials and industry partners to strengthen strategic partnerships and enhance defence cooperation.

In parallel, Taskforce Hirst is delivering a number of strands of concrete activity. For example, DE&S has placed a £61 million contract with BAE Systems to produce artillery barrels, and, in early 2025, Yorkshire-based Sheffield Forgemasters will begin forging these for the first time in over two decades. The barrels will then be sent to Ukraine, where a domestic defence company partner will finish and integrate them ready for the Ukrainian Armed Forces to use, sustaining critical capabilities granted in kind by the UK and its partners. Hirst is also proving to be an effective conduit for international support; through the taskforce, an agreement has been signed with Sweden to repair their Archer artillery systems in UK facilities in Ukraine.

"Heading into the third year of the war, Ukraine will need support from its allies more than ever," said Major General Reilly. "The UK is committed to playing a key role in supporting Ukraine and DE&S is at the centre of that commitment."



## FEATURE



# The UK operation readying Ukraine's troops for the front-line

**DE&S has been supporting Operation Interflex since it began in 2022, helping train and equip Ukrainian personnel for the front-line.**

**Delivered by experienced British Army instructors in locations throughout the UK, Operation Interflex is providing Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel with the essential skills for front-line combat.**

The programme takes volunteer recruits with little or no previous military experience and, over five weeks, trains them in patrol tactics and the Law of Armed Conflict, and teaches them how to handle weapons and administer battlefield first aid. Ukrainian troops are put through their paces in realistic day and night scenarios that show them how to operate effectively in both urban and rural environments.

Since June 2022, when Interflex began, the UK has trained over 51,000 Ukrainian personnel. This has allowed Ukraine to replenish, rebuild and scale-up their resistance by accelerating deployment of their forces, as they continue to fight back against Russia's invasion.

Beyond basic infantry training, Operation Interflex is also teaching Ukrainian medics life-saving battlefield medicine. In a first-of-its-kind course, Interflex is also helping Ukrainian military chaplains to offer spiritual and pastoral support to their compatriots on the front-line.

Working alongside them, DE&S teams are providing Ukrainian recruits with a full complement of personal items to equip each one for the battlefield, from head to toe. This includes helmets, warm-weather gear, tents and sleeping bags. Troops return to

Ukraine with bags full of kit, weighing around 80 kg. In total, DE&S has procured and supplied over 8.7 million items.

In addition to this, DE&S delivery teams have procured the equipment required to carry out the training itself. For example, DE&S worked with the Royal School of Military Engineers to produce low-cost, highly accurate visual representations of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines using 3D-printing.

Michelle Sanders, DE&S Deputy Director Operations, said: "The training equips Ukrainian volunteers with both the skills and kit that will help them to defend their national sovereignty. It's a whole defence effort delivered by a range of teams and is a true demonstration of what can be achieved – and the difference that it can make – when we all work together"

The Operation Interflex programme has not remained static. As fighting on the front-lines in Ukraine has evolved, so have the tactics and training being taught. The use of uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) has transformed the battlefield and the UK Government has committed to supplying vast numbers of UAS to Ukraine. Reflecting this, Interflex training now also includes modules on how to operate and maintain UK-made drones procured by DE&S and supplied to Ukraine.

Operation Interflex was established in the UK when Operation Orbital, the British Army's long-term training programme for Ukrainian personnel in Ukraine, was halted after the outbreak of the war.

## NEWS

# UK steps up life-saving medical support for Ukraine's Armed Forces

**The UK is stepping up support for Ukrainian troops wounded on the front-line, who will receive life-saving medical support and rehabilitation services, supported by DE&S, through the UK's Project Renovator.**

**Project Renovator draws on leading UK medical expertise to support and grow Ukraine's military rehabilitation and medical services, and help troops who have suffered life-changing injuries to return to the front-line or help them readjust to civilian life after the conflict ends.**

Defence Secretary John Healey has announced a new £20 million funding package for the programme – doubling the Government's funding for the scheme – as the UK's cast-iron commitment to Ukraine continues.

The project, which started in October 2023, also includes training for surgeons and rebuilding a military hospital that was targeted by Russian bombs earlier in the conflict. From providing life-saving surgery, to issuing advanced prosthetics, physiotherapy, and aftercare, the rehabilitation hospital will be a significant upgrade for Ukraine's current services, with Ukrainian surgeons, doctors, and nurses being trained by the UK.

DE&S is the Project Renovator delivery lead for equipment and infrastructure.. This includes the procurement and delivery medical equipment and supplies, and the installation of medical rehabilitation equipment on site. DE&S has also delivered

a hospital-wide heating system, which can act as a back-up in the event that Russian airstrikes cause a loss of power.

The Defence Secretary said: "In this critical period, Ukrainians need our support to keep them in the fight and to put their nation in the strongest possible position ahead of any talks. That's why we are stepping up further our UK leadership and life-saving medical support for brave Ukrainian fighters. Our commitment to them is unshakeable.

"I'm proud of the UK's leadership in supporting Ukraine, both now and in the long-term, and this new investment in Ukraine's military medical services will harness the UK's leading expertise to ensure wounded troops are given the best treatment possible."

The work will help address a major challenge posed by the conflict, with the largest casualty figures seen in Europe since the Second World War. The support stands in stark contrast to Russia's widely-reported poor treatment of veterans, leading to instances of crime and violence when they return from the frontline.

While a small number of British personnel have been working to deliver the project in Ukraine, nearly 100 Ukrainian surgeons, doctors and nurses are due to travel to

the UK this year to receive further medical training using the latest techniques and equipment.

Defence Medical Services personnel from Project Renovator have been working with the team at the UK's world-leading equivalent, the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall, to produce around 50 rehabilitation training videos to support the training of Ukrainian medical staff.

The UK is also encouraging allies to support and grow this work as part of the broader NATO Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine scheme.

Around £20 million from NATO has been invested in the rehabilitation hospital so far, much of which was provided by the UK. In addition to major structural repairs, improvements have included more than £300,000 worth of new gym equipment, and £400,000 worth of prosthetics and associated equipment.

Norway has also announced it is carrying out work to repair and improve a similar facility under the same NATO scheme, working closely with the UK. It comes as both nations have committed to deepen military ties, with a new agreement being drawn up following a visit from the Defence Secretary this week.

## NEWS

# DE&S poised to deliver Ukraine firepower package

**Defence Secretary John Healey announces £150 million military package, which includes drones, battle tanks, armoured vehicles and air defence systems.**

**The UK Government has announced a new £150 million military package to support Ukrainian troops on the front-line of their nation's fight against Russia, much of which will be delivered by DE&S and its partners.**

In February, defence leaders from across the world gathered at NATO HQ in Brussels, as the UK convened a major Ukraine summit, demonstrating their unwavering military support for Ukraine. Over 50 allies and partners, including Ukraine, the US, Japan and Australia, met for the 26th Ukraine Defence Contact Group, chaired by Defence Secretary John Healey, the first time for any European nation.

Defence Secretary Healey said: "2025 is the critical year for the war in Ukraine. Ukrainians continue to fight with huge courage – military and civilians alike, and their bravery – fused with our support – has proved a lethal combination. While Russia is weakened, it remains undeniably dangerous. We must step up further – and secure peace through strength – together."

The military support package, which will be delivered by DE&S, includes dozens of battle tanks and armoured vehicles, and air defence systems. The UK is on track to provide thousands of drones to Ukraine, with final deliveries due in March. More than 50 armoured and protective vehicles, including modernised T-72 tanks, will be deployed to Ukraine by the end of the Spring, building on the thousands of pieces of equipment the UK has already given to Ukraine.

This year the UK's total commitment to Ukraine has reached its highest ever level, standing at £4.5 billion.

Air defence equipment with a 90 percent success rate in downing Russian one-way drones will support more than 100

Ukrainian air defence teams as they continue to protect Ukrainian critical national infrastructure frequently targeted by Russia. The UK and Denmark are also providing 15 Gravehawk air defence systems to Ukraine.

The military package includes major new maintenance contracts to support in-country repairs to critical kit – helping keep Ukraine's tanks and artillery in the fight and bringing broken equipment back into use more quickly. This means thousands of pieces of military equipment which the UK has already donated to Ukraine will be repaired and maintained through contracts worth around £60 million.

As part of this UK defence firm Babcock will train Ukrainian personnel to maintain and repair crucial equipment, such as Challenger 2 tanks, self-propelled artillery and combat reconnaissance vehicles, inside Ukraine.

David Lockwood, CEO of Babcock International Group, said: "Ensuring Ukraine's military vehicles and equipment are back in frontline action with no delay is critical. Babcock is proud to have the know-how and expertise to continue to support these operations for both the UK and Ukrainian Governments."

BAE Systems has also been awarded a £14 million contract, funded by Sweden and procured through the UK-administered International Fund for Ukraine, to repair Archer artillery systems. Working with Lancashire-based firm AMS, repairs of the Swedish-gifted Archer systems will be carried out in Ukraine, with Ukrainian soldiers given technical training so they can maintain equipment for years to come.





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# DE&S awards £285 million Combat Management Systems contract

**A new in-service support and modernisation programme will maintain combat management systems across the Royal Navy fleet for up to the next 10 years.**

**DE&S has awarded a £285 million contract to BAE Systems Surface Ships, as part of Project RECODE (Real-time Combat system Open Data Enablers).**

Under the contract, BAE Systems will provide Royal Navy combat management systems (CMS), and related shared infrastructure and warship networks, with in-service support and modernisation. This will ensure that architectural and capability changes will be delivered directly to ships to keep pace with the operational tempo.

Commodore Phil Game, DE&S' Interim Director of Sense, Decide and Communicate, said: "This new programme will take on proactive management of obsolescence, ensuring that at its core it is evergreen, robust and flexible. The contract award is a brilliant example of delivering better products, more quickly, under the new DE&S operating model. Through our close collaborative work with industry colleagues, this contract will also help to upskill the programme's workforce and sustain UK jobs. The improvements made will be instrumental in making the Royal Navy more agile and capable in our rapidly changing global defence environment."

The CMS is the primary method for Royal Navy operators to interact with their vessel's weapons and sensors. The system provides a range of tools to aid tactical and situation awareness, including threat evaluation and weapon assignment, as well as weapon direction and control. Royal Navy platforms receive information from an array of sources and in multiple formats. Through a combination of data correlation and data fusion, the CMS helps operators process information and take informed actions.

The support and modernisation programme will ensure high levels of safety, security and availability of combat systems

equipment for Type 23 and Type 26 frigates, Type 45 destroyers and Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers.

The programme, which runs for eight years with the option to add two additional years, will sustain more than 200 highly skilled UK jobs at BAE Systems in Filton, Dorchester, New Malden, Frimley and Portsmouth. Through the supply chain, it will also create additional investment in small and medium enterprises and high-tech suppliers across the UK.

The RECODE programme is aligned with the new DE&S operating model's improved ways of working, which will mean closer working, joint decision-making, and increased communication and collaboration between DE&S and Navy Command.

Captain Kevin Miller, Royal Navy Combat Systems Design Authority and Surface Ships Combat Systems Group Team Leader, said: "We have a long and successful history with Naval Ships Combat Systems and RECODE represents an important next phase of our collaboration. Today's challenging battlespace means we must adapt and evolve at pace."

The contract builds on 13 years of collaboration established through long-running in-service programmes, with BAE Systems' CMS having been used by the Navy for the past 25 years.

Steve Carter, BAE Systems Naval Ships Combat Systems Director, said: "RECODE represents huge strides forward in our partnership with the Royal Navy and will help to realise the warfare capability of the future. The global threat picture, advances in commercial technology and the immense volume of data available to crews means we need to become even more ambitious and far-reaching in our services and support. We are excited and privileged to secure this programme that will sit at the heart of the Navy's ambition to be a protean force."

## NEWS

# MOD component recycling project achieves early success

**A joint MOD and industry project has demonstrated the potential for metal parts to be recycled and used to deliver new capabilities.**

**A first-of-its-kind recycling initiative has turned components from retired RAF Tornado aircraft into new parts for Tempest, the UK's next-generation combat jet.**

The Tornado 2 Tempest project is led by the DE&S Defence Recycling and Disposals Team (DRDT) in partnership with the MOD Future Combat Air System (FCAS) programme, Rolls-Royce and Lancashire-based Additive Manufacturing Solutions Limited (AMS).

The project used 3D printing to turn powdered metal into new parts for Orpheus, Rolls-Royce's small engine demonstrator, part of the FCAS programme delivering Tempest.

Thomas Powell, DRDT's Strategic and Submarine Recycling Senior Commercial Manager, said: "This solution can reduce the costs and burden of sourcing critical and high-value metals. It can also produce components which are lighter, stronger and longer lasting than those made through traditional forging techniques, further enhancing the MOD's overall sustainability and effectiveness."

Many of the MOD's surplus assets contain strategic metals, including high-quality steel, aluminium and titanium. DRDT is routinely tasked to dispose of these assets, which cannot be sold or need to be destroyed for security purposes. They contracted AMS to assess whether these assets could instead be atomised into powders – known as 'feedstock' – to make new parts.

Tornado parts containing titanium, including jet engine blades from a low-pressure air compressor, were selected. They were cleaned, successfully atomised and recycled into a nose cone and compressor blades. These were fitted on to the Orpheus test engine, and passed suitability and safety checks.

Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry Maria Eagle said: "The Tornado 2 Tempest project highlights the creativity, ingenuity and innovation Defence employs in our approach to national security. By working with key industry partners, we can deliver savings, reduce reliance on global supply chains and ensure our Armed Forces have the very best kit to keep our country safe."

Funded by UK Strategic Command's Defence Support Organisation, the feat shows that turning old parts into new is viable. This has the potential to bring huge benefits to the MOD and wider

Defence, especially through increasing the accessibility and reuse of strategic metals.

A team of more than 80 people participated in this project, including DRDT's commercial graduates and Rolls-Royce graduate apprentices. The initiative led to the creation of three jobs and sustained two at AMS. They now expect to create 25 new jobs by offering the innovation to other suppliers.

Andrew Eady, Rolls-Royce VP FCAS Sustainability, said: "The Tornado 2 Tempest project exemplifies the forward-thinking sustainability principles embedded in the FCAS Sustainability Strategy and MOD Defence Support Strategy. This project is bold, exciting and innovative, and a demonstration of exemplary collaboration between the MOD, industry and SME, furthering the drive for circular economy practices and innovative digital enablers in Defence."

AMS Director Robert Higham said: "At AMS our tagline is 'Innovative Solutions for a Sustainable Future' and we were confident our innovations and ideas would have a great bearing on the future of a resilient supply. This project turned our proposed solutions into a reality, and we have been very humbled and grateful to the MOD and Rolls Royce, for allowing us to showcase our capability to deliver game-changing circular economy processes and parts in Defence."



## NEWS

# New Navy maintenance contract marks one year of progress

**The £1.85 billion Maritime Sensor Enhancement Team contract, which will sustain world-class sonar and sensors for Royal Navy ships, marks its first anniversary.**

**When it was announced in February 2024, the £1.85 billion Maritime Sensor Enhancement Team (MSET) contract set out an ambitious vision to provide smarter maintenance for the Royal Navy fleet over a 15-year period.**

Staffed by personnel from Thales and DE&S, MSET will use data management to analyse and support the long-term availability and resilience of critical naval assets, including sonar, optronic masts and electronic warfare. This enhanced support will focus on the availability of ships and submarines to deploy at sea for operations.

The team recently held a ceremony in Bristol to mark the progress made across its five industrial sites and four dockyards.

One year in, MSET has already reached some major milestones. MSET has opened its Joint Operations Centre in Bristol, where Thales and DE&S staff will work together in a collaborative space, sharing data and information to accelerate decision-making. A further 150 hardware engineers, service managers and waterfront engineers have been added to the team, marking a headcount growth of 50 percent.

One of MSET's key features is having specialists and experts available to support sailors at the Faslane, Portsmouth, Devonport and Bahrain dockyards. This enhanced waterfront presence will allow equipment to be triaged and maintained at source, enabling rapid improvements in fault diagnosis for sensors and systems.

A new Devonport facility in Plymouth is expected to open in 2025, which will provide direct support for ships fitted with towed array sonar modules used for operations such as anti-submarine hunting. This facility will provide waterside support for sonar maintenance, low-level

repairs and help to reduce overall defect turnaround times.

Dan Roberts, DE&S Sonar and Maritime Sensors Team Leader, said: "In taking the opportunity to reflect on the first year of MSET, it's clear there has been a defined shift towards delivering our collective ambition for increased equipment availability with a long-term focus on through-life equipment support. There is genuine momentum to evolve data-driven decisions, with Thales, DE&S and our Royal Navy end-users working together to realise these improvements.

"At the heart of this has been an effort to ensure we set the conditions for all involved to act and work in the correct manner. Collaboration, trust and transparency are paramount in our collective drive to further improve the service for sonar and sensor equipment."

The combined Thales and DE&S team have also delivered over 1,600 hours of volunteering through STEM (Science, Technology Engineering and Maths) and

charitable initiatives to communities around its naval base sites and at Thales sites across the UK.

Matt Bliss, Thales MSET Programme Director, said: "The anniversary has given everyone time to pause and reflect on our first year, celebrate individual and team performance, and refocus on the year ahead. 2024 has seen significant changes in our Service Delivery Model and team size as we've moved away from our old operating model and commenced the journey towards delivering a proactive, data-led service.

"With a joint team of over 500 people delivering MSET across DE&S and Thales, it's important to recognise and reward positive behaviours, excellent collaboration and those who go above and beyond. This year now gives us the opportunity to build upon a strong foundation, ramp up our transformation activities, delivering new digital tools and analytics and open a new Enhanced Waterfront Facility in Devonport."





## NEWS



# RAF continues Protector flight testing

**The RAF continues to flight test Protector, with four of the new uncrewed aircraft now delivered to the UK.**

**Procured by DE&S, Protector represents the next generation of remotely piloted aircraft.**

Able to operate at altitudes of up to 40,000 ft and for more than 30 hours of flying time, it will provide the RAF with advanced Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) capabilities.

The latest test flight took off from RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire under the watchful eye of the RAF's 56 (Test & Evaluation) Squadron, with supported from the 31 and 54 Squadrons. Part of phase three of the test and evaluation programme, this was the second UK flight for Protector, marking the start of key integration and operational testing for the aircraft.

Richard Cameron, DE&S Uncrewed Air System Delivery Team Leader, said: "The latest successful flight of Protector in UK airspace is an important step as we continue to work with our industry partners to deliver this advanced new capability for the RAF. A quarter of the fleet is now on UK soil, while a further three Protectors are being used for valuable test, evaluation and training in the USA."

A total of 16 Protectors are expected to be delivered by mission partner General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, replacing the current Reaper aircraft. They will be fitted with a suite of

advanced equipment and precision strike weapons, including the Brimstone missile and the Paveway IV laser guided bomb.

The Protector fleet will initially be based at RAF Waddington, but could be deployed anywhere in the world while being remotely piloted from the airbase, which will also serve as a training centre for UK students. This centre will put the RAF's ISTAR force at the forefront of uncrewed air systems for the UK and its allies. The first Certifiable Ground Control Station and simulator have already been delivered and installed at RAF Waddington.

Wing Commander Podmore, Officer Commanding 56 Squadron, said: "This flight was a significant milestone and a culmination of a huge effort across the entire Protector enterprise. The flight test team, led by 56 Squadron, and supported by 31 and 54 Squadrons, should be tremendously proud noting this event marks the start of key integration and operational testing for the platform."

Beyond its military operational roles, Protector will also be capable of operating within UK civilian airspace to support counter-terrorism operations and provide support to Military Aid to Civilian Authorities tasks, such as assisting HM Coastguard with search and rescue missions.



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**FLEXIBILITY AND TRAINING**  
IS RARE TO FIND”*

- HEMA, COMMERCIAL OFFICER

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## NEWS

# New contract to deliver advanced UK satellite capabilities

**Thanks to a contract secured by DE&S, a satellite system to support military operations will be designed and built in the UK, strengthening Intelligence, Reconnaissance And Surveillance capabilities.**

**Armed forces personnel will have access to the latest space-based imagery for use in military operations, following a deal signed for a new satellite system named Oberon.**

The £127 million contract with Airbus, secured by DE&S, will support around 200 skilled jobs in Stevenage and Portsmouth, boosting the UK's space sector and contributing to the Government's growth mission.

Expected to launch in 2027, the Oberon satellite system will be made up of two Synthetic Aperture Radar satellites and will be able to capture day and night-time images of the Earth's surface. It will strengthen the UK's Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, and contribute to other government tasks, such as natural disaster monitoring, mapping and climate change tracking.

Oberon will have advanced imagery sensors that build on the capabilities of Tyche, UK Space Command's first satellite which launched in August 2024, and Juno, an electro-optic satellite contracted at the end of 2024 and due to launch in 2027.

The contract for Oberon was awarded to Airbus by DE&S through a competitive procurement, which worked with small and medium-sized enterprises across the UK to leverage innovative new technologies for the 400 kg satellites. The antennas will be supplied by Oxford Space Systems, which has developed an innovative wrapped rib antenna. This enables the deployment of a primary reflector and a secondary surface from a compact launch configuration of carbon fibre structures. These are stowed for launch, but spring into shape once in orbit, forming a large parabolic dish on deployment.

Paul Russell, Space Team Leader at DE&S, said: "This has been a superb team effort by DE&S, Space Command, DSTL and industry. With the award of the Oberon contract, we will deliver the next in a series of game-changing capabilities to UK Space Command providing the UK military with leading space-based Synthetic Aperture Radar while helping to keep our nation safe and prosperous."

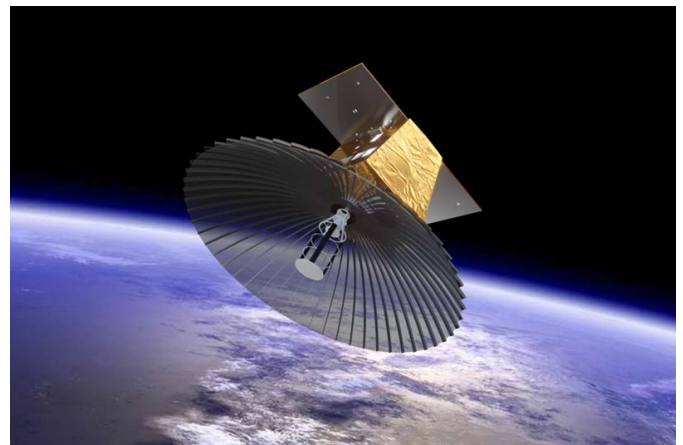
The deal comes after UK Space Command published the first images captured by Tyche. The images of Heathrow Airport, Sydney, Washington DC and the Californian wildfires demonstrate Tyche's ability to capture imagery from anywhere on earth.

The satellites form part of the MOD's space-based ISR programme, known as ISTARI. These will deliver a constellation of satellites and supporting ground systems by 2031. Constellations of ISR satellites can use different sensors and cameras, allowing their focus to move quickly from one area of the world to another. In contrast to conventional cameras, Oberon will use Synthetic Aperture Radar to capture imagery in all-weather conditions.

ISTARI will provide the UK with vital space-based intelligence capabilities, and ensure flexible global monitoring and swift response times to emerging threats.

UK Space Commander Major General Paul Tedman said: "Through UK Space Command, Defence is partnering with industry and continuing to invest in advanced and innovative space technologies. Oberon, alongside Tyche and other satellites in our ISTARI constellation, will allow us to observe what's happening on Earth from space at any time and through any weather."

Ben Bridge, Airbus Defence and Space UK Chairman, said: "Oberon's satellites will give the UK a much-needed sovereign capability and greatly enhance its space surveillance autonomy. Airbus in the UK has more than 45 years' experience in the design and build of high-resolution radar satellites and, once in orbit, these spacecraft will play a vital role in keeping our Armed Forces safe around the world."



## NEWS

# Royal Navy shipbuilding drives growth in Scotland

**Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry visits Rosyth shipbuilding facility to reaffirm the need for defence investment to support UK-wide prosperity.**

**Scottish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) recently contributed to the Government's Defence Industrial Strategy.**

They took part in a roundtable discussion about the upcoming strategy at Babcock's Rosyth site, the home of production for the Royal Navy Type 31 programme, managed by DE&S.

The event, hosted by Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry Maria Eagle, emphasised the UK Government's commitment to fostering growth in the Defence sector. It provided a platform for SMEs to explore challenges and opportunities in the shipbuilding industry, reinforcing the strategy's goal of ensuring defence investment supports UK-wide prosperity.

With its consultation running until the end of February, the upcoming Defence Industrial Strategy seeks to grow a more integrated, resilient, efficient supply chain.

The Type 31 programme demonstrates the breadth of the UK's shipbuilding skills, innovation and capability. Babcock has invested around £200 million in its Rosyth facilities over the last decade, including the development of a state-of-the-art assembly hall that enables the simultaneous construction of two Type 31 frigates.

Ongoing contracts like Type 31 are a key part of the UK Government's Plan for Change, safeguarding national security while raising living standards across the UK with high-quality, skilled, productive jobs.

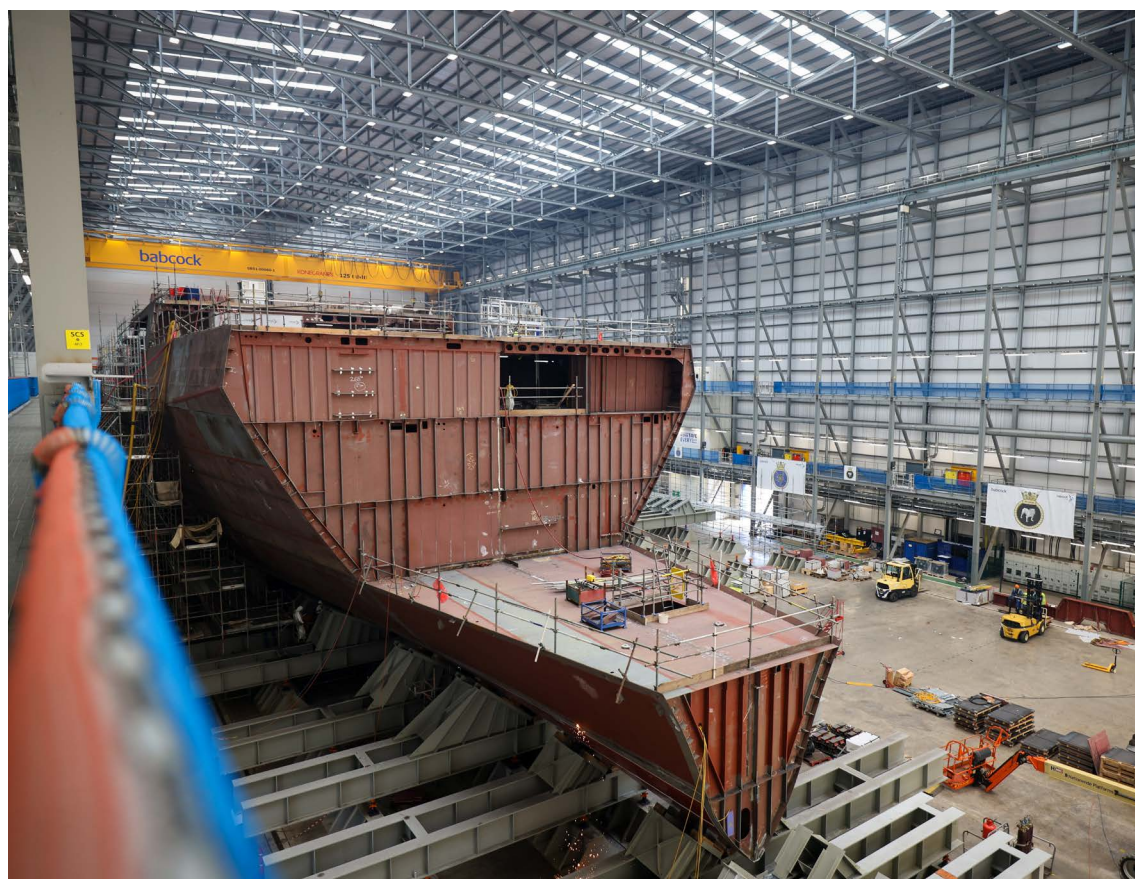
The Minister said: "It was great to visit Rosyth and witness first-hand their world-class shipbuilding programme which will strengthen our national security into the future, while boosting jobs and small and medium-sized businesses across Scotland.

"This Government is working swiftly to develop a new Defence Industrial Strategy, in partnership with industry, innovators and workers, to drive jobs and growth in every nation and region of the UK, supporting our Plan for Change."

Awarded to Babcock in November 2019, the contract for five Type 31 frigates has secured a legacy of shipbuilding activity at Rosyth, one of the UK's largest waterside manufacturing and repair facilities. The programme has created and sustained 2,500 skilled jobs, reinforcing Scotland's vital contribution to national defence capabilities.

The Type 31 Inspiration class is based on Babcock's Arrowhead 140 design, which is adaptable to meet the needs of export customers, as demonstrated in successes with Poland and Indonesia. International interest in further exports of the Arrowhead 140 remains strong.

Babcock officially commenced construction on HMS Formidable at the end of last year, marking the third of five Type 31 frigates being built for the Royal Navy. Flexible and adaptable by design, the Type 31 is a general-purpose frigate that will undertake missions such as interception, disruption, intelligence gathering, defence engagement and providing humanitarian support.



## NEWS

# DE&S highlights

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

## Full operating capability for upgraded Merlin helicopters

The Merlin Life Sustainment Programme, overseen by DE&S, has now fully transitioned 19 Mk3 and six Mk3a Merlin helicopters to a new Mk4 and Mk4a standard.

Having reached full operating capability, the Mk4/Mk4a Merlin can now operate from the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers, amphibious assault ships, Type 23 frigates and Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels, and will operate from the Type 45 destroyer.

DE&S worked with the Royal Navy and industry partner Leonardo Helicopters to deliver these upgrades through a single source contract worth £399 million.

Key upgrades to the helicopter include a new folding main rotor head and folding tail, which allows two Merlin helicopters to fit in one aircraft carrier lift, and an improved defensive aid suite with a system that warns against and locates hostile laser-guided weapons. These upgrades and the latest system integrations contribute to the Merlin Mk4/4A's reputation as the world's most advanced amphibious battlefield helicopter.

The upgrade enables Merlin to be a more effective component in future littoral manoeuvre operations, allowing the Royal Navy Commando Helicopter Force to sustain and field a more modern aviation capability. A littoral manoeuvre describes amphibious operations – using both air and surface craft – launched from a ship.

## £250 million contract to strengthen Royal Navy warship communications

The Royal Navy fleet will have their communications systems upgraded through a £250 million contract awarded to Thales UK. The contract, awarded by DE&S, will upgrade the Royal Navy's internal and external fleet communications, reinforcing the UK's continuous at-sea deterrent and supporting global operations for the next 10 years.

Communication systems on Royal Navy ships are a critical component of their ability to operate and fight. To meet and

sustain global Royal Navy operational commitments requires enduring support contracts to maintain mission critical equipment.

The work will support around 100 UK jobs, including those at Thales UK sites in Portsmouth, Plymouth, Crawley, Reading and Bristol, through the largest ever contract for the provision of naval communication capabilities. The Maritime Communications Capability Support (MCCS) contract is expected to save the Royal Navy up to £30 million in through-life costs over the next decade.

Thales UK will also provide 'waterfront' office services, recovery for ageing equipment and inventory management, ensuring spare part availability and ongoing defect repairs as required.

## DE&S expert elected as chair of defence logistics forum

Paul Salmon, DE&S Support Authority Lead Data Steward, has been elected as Chair of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport UK (CILT UK) Defence Forum. The CILT UK Defence Forum is an important platform for advancing defence logistics. It acts as a space where the defence enterprise can share logistics best practice and innovation.

Upon being elected, Paul said: "I am honoured to be elected as Chair of the CILT UK Defence Forum. In a rapidly evolving world, collaboration between defence and commercial logistics is essential. My focus will be on servant leadership, empowering members, fostering knowledge exchange and championing professional growth.

"My priorities for 2025 include strengthening cross-sector collaboration, raising awareness of defence logistics impact and creating opportunities for professional development. We will bridge the gap between military and civilian logistics, ensuring innovation and best practices are shared. This forum is a community, and my role is to support, connect and drive meaningful progress."



**PEOPLE**

# Holly Critchlow

**Job title**

Corporate Reporting Bespoke Trading Entity (BTE) Finance

**What does your role involve?**

I'm one of the finance leads in the Corporate BTE Reporting Team. It's an evolving role, having only been formally established in November as part of the new DE&S operating model. On a typical day I provide guidance and support on questions around BTE forecasting for DE&S operating costs, including consultancies and other professional services. I also work with DE&S' chief finance officers and finance business partners on ad-hoc requests.

**What do you most enjoy about your job?**

I enjoy the variety of people I get to speak to in my job. I'm in a small team of six, so although we each focus on different areas and themes, that doesn't stop any of us from getting stuck in to provide support wherever it's needed. I also get to be involved in discussions held with the Executive Leadership Team.

**What is your greatest accomplishment to date?**

As stereotypical as it sounds for someone in finance, it's probably completing my Management Accounting qualification. I was part-way through it when the pandemic started, so the way I was able to learn and sit the exams was quite a change and pretty stressful, especially without a stable internet connection. Somehow, I still managed to complete it alongside big changes like moving house and getting a promotion.

**What keeps you energised about working at DE&S?**

We can get a lot of curve-ball questions coming in so although reporting on the forecast can seem like a repetitive task, no month is ever the same.

**Who or what has shaped who you are?**

My family, as well as some great managers over the years who have supported me both personally and professionally. They've all helped coach me on how to be the best version of myself and that there are no limits on what I can achieve.

**What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?**

Up until Christmas I was going to a ballet class twice a week. I've danced since I was about five years old and it's something I've kept up even as an adult. I'm quite late into my pregnancy now so I've paused it but I hope to get back to it in the summer!

**What might surprise people about you?**

I used to participate in amateur acting as a child and performed in an adaption of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall. It was truly an experience I will never forget!

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

Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness. It is much better to speak up and get the support you need than to sit in silence and worry or complete a task incorrectly because you were too afraid to say something. Whenever I speak to new people, I try make them feel at ease and say that no question is a stupid question.





The UK Wheelchair Basketball team at the Invictus Games 2025. In February 2025, the seventh Invictus Games brought together over 500 competitors from 23 nations to compete in 11 adaptive sports.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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**Cover photo:**  
A Ukrainian military chaplain at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre at the Defence Academy in the UK.







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