

# [Defence Secretary visits British troops defending NATO's eastern flank in Estonia](#)

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News story

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Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and Estonian defence minister Jüri Luik have lunch with troops in Tapa

At Tapa base, the HQ of the UK's largest overseas deployment, Mr Wallace discussed with members of the 5 Rifles battlegroup the vital deterrence and defence they provide in Estonia as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP).

Members of the battlegroup also provided the Defence Secretary with a visual demonstration of the fearsome capability of the Challenger II battle tanks deployed on the mission.

The UK is the lead nation of the multinational NATO eFP Battlegroup in Estonia with over 900 British troops deployed alongside Danish and Estonian forces. In meetings with Estonia's Minister for Defence Jüri Luik, Prime Minister Jüri Ratas and parliamentarians of Estonia's National Defence Committee, the Defence Secretary reaffirmed that the United Kingdom would maintain its persistent presence in the country for as long as necessary.

**Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:**

While we celebrate Christmas at home, over 6400 of our Armed Forces personnel will be working away from their families to protect the people of the United Kingdom and its interests.

So I was delighted to be able to pass on all our thanks to troops in Estonia. Their presence provides a concrete deterrence to an increasingly assertive Russia and is a demonstration of the United Kingdom's unwavering commitment to European security.

Both Mr Wallace and Mr Luik agreed that the UK and Estonia see eye-to-eye when it comes to identifying the threats to regional security and would continue to deepen a tight knit defence relationship that has grown in strength since the UK first took the lead of eFP in the country nearly four years ago.

As well as being trusted NATO Allies, the UK and Estonia are both members of the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force and the Northern Group of north European nations. In addition to the Army's persistent presence, the RAF have deployed to Ämari air base in the north of the country for NATO Baltic Air Policing in 2016 and 2019. The UK also contributes around 150 personnel to the US-led NATO eFP battlegroup in Poland.

Our soldiers have fought side-by-side in Afghanistan and both are currently contributors to international efforts to bring security and stability to the Sahel region in Africa.

The strength of our defence relationship was also clear this July when the Ministry of Defence loaned four Jackal vehicles to the Estonian Defence Forces until next March for elite soldiers of the Estonian Armed Forces to use on their counter-terror deployment in Mali.

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# Spring start for Ulverston's new Cross-a-Moor roundabout

A multi-million pound project to tackle congestion and pave the way for new homes and jobs near Ulverston in Cumbria will start next spring

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# Spring start for Ulverston's new Cross-a-Moor roundabout

Highways England is constructing the new roundabout along the A590 at Cross-a-Moor south of Ulverston. It is expected to cost around £7 million with partnership funding from Highways England, Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and South Lakeland District Council.

The new roundabout will replace the existing staggered junction with Main Road running south off the A590 and Pennington Lane running north of it. Preparation work is scheduled to start in spring with the main construction work following in the summer.

Steve Mason, Highways England senior project manager, said:

“This new roundabout is a significant investment in the infrastructure of the Furness peninsula. It will reduce congestion and improve safety on the A590 and local road network as well as supporting the creation of new jobs and homes. We’re aiming to keep the road open during construction – certainly during the daytime – and minimise any inconvenience to drivers and other road users.”

Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government Luke Hall MP said:

We’re supporting transport improvements in Ulverston by backing this project with a Local Growth Fund investment of over £900,000.

It’s great news that the roundabout will solve ongoing congestion problems, as well as unlocking new homes and jobs, which will improve quality of life for the community.

By investing in transport infrastructure across the country, we’re making all our towns great places to live, work and visit.

Councillor Keith Little, Cumbria County Council’s Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, said:

I'm delighted with this announcement. We've worked closely with the LEP, South Lakeland District Council and Highways England on this over a number of years, and it's fantastic news for Cumbria that this funding is now secured. If the county is to meet the demands of our growing population, attracting more new businesses and welcoming more visitors, we need to improve and enhance our infrastructure. The new roundabout will make big difference, and is vital to unlocking the economic and commercial potential of Ulverston and surrounding areas.

Steve Curl, Board Member for the Cumbria LEP, added:

We are delighted to provide Growth Deal and Cumbria Infrastructure Fund subsidy to support this project, which will generate significant economic benefits in Ulverston, South Lakeland and more widely, South Cumbria. It will unlock much needed new housing for our residents. It will importantly help our recovery from the economic impacts of COVID-19 by making Cumbria an even more attractive place for people and businesses to locate and grow.

South Lakeland District Council portfolio holder for Economy, Culture and Leisure Councillor Robin Ashcroft said:

The council's contribution to the junction improvements demonstrates our commitment to support growth in the local economy, deliver new employment opportunities and improve the lives of people living in this area.

We have a key council commitment to help create new affordable homes for rent in South Lakeland by 2025 and the housing being planned for that area of Ulverston represents about 20% of all the new homes to be built in the entire district. Improving the Cross-a-Moor junction will be a critical component in unlocking these developments by improving accessibility to help SLDC to deliver its wider plans and ambitions.

Improving safety on this busy stretch of the A590 will also help ensure that the local transport infrastructure is better protected, which is vital for maintaining strategic connectivity to the M6 corridor, attracting new investment and supporting business growth.

Highways England's contribution to the project has come from the Government's growth and housing fund, a special fund earmarked to support the creation of new homes and jobs by tackling congestion 'hotspots' acting as a brake on economic investment. The fund is part of the Government's £27.4 billion investment in the country's motorways and major A roads in the five years from April 2020.

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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# **[Change of UK Permanent Representative to the WTO, UN and other International Organisations in Geneva: Simon Manley](#)**

Mr Simon Manley CMG has been appointed the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organisation, United Nations and other International Organisations