

News story: Defence Minister Focuses on Scottish business, skills, and innovation

The MOD spent £1.5 billion with Scottish businesses last year and supports 9,700 jobs across Scotland, with the Royal Navy's new Queen Elizabeth Carriers being built in Rosyth and new Offshore Patrol Vessels under construction in Govan and Scotstoun ahead of this summer's Type 26 Frigate steel cut.

Mrs Baldwin met Scottish SMEs at the Defence Suppliers Forum, held at defence company Leonardo's facility near Edinburgh. The Forum builds relationships between businesses and Government through face-to-face meetings and candid discussion.

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin said:

Scotland is on the front line defending the United Kingdom from growing threats on land, air, and sea; and the Government is listening to Scottish business and building skills to keep the UK safe, secure, and prosperous.

This is yet more evidence of our unquestionable commitment to defence and industry in Scotland, as our rising defence budget and £178bn equipment plan supports Scottish business, jobs, and skills far into the future.

Following the Forum, Mrs Baldwin recognised the winners of the Raytheon SME supply chain awards at the company's Glenrothes plant, where it employs over 600 engineers and technicians. Amongst the winners, were North Lanarkshire company, Link Cable Assemblies, who received the Enabling Business Growth Award.

Apprenticeships are a key element in creating a country where everyone has the chance to go as far as their talent and hard work will allow, regardless of background. 24 graduates and 24 apprentices joined Raytheon's programmes this year, some of whom Mrs Baldwin met to hear about the company's support for the Government's focus on skills through its science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) ambassador programmes. Over 50 Raytheon STEM Ambassadors visit schools to teach pupils about aerodynamics, autonomy, and control systems.

SMEs are at the heart of the MOD's Innovation Initiative. Backed by an £800 million fund, the Initiative encourages imagination, ingenuity and entrepreneurship. The goal is to work more effectively with businesses across the UK – and particularly with SMEs which might not normally think of themselves as Defence suppliers.

The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review committed to spending 25% of procurement money with SME suppliers by 2020. As part of this drive to support businesses, the MOD has launched a refreshed Supplier Portal and an improved Contracts platform linked to the Defence and Security Accelerator. The Accelerator was created to help businesses collaborate with Defence and develop new routes to market for their technology.