

# Press release: Welsh Secretary welcomes Defence Secretary to Welsh bases leading the way in training and education

In a visit spanning the length of the country Gavin Williamson, Alun Cairns and Nigel Adams will inspect some of the Welsh bases contributing to the UK's vital defence capabilities. From speaking to those undertaking fast jet training in Hawk aircraft at RAF Valley to exploring the School of Technical Training at St Athan, the UK Government Ministers will see first-hand what Wales has to offer in defence, security and innovation.

On their visit to RAF St. Athan, the UK Government Ministers will meet high-ranking representatives from the Welsh-based RAF and army. At the meetings they will discuss their ambition for the future of the south Wales base.

RAF Valley on Anglesey is home to the No 4 Flying Training School, responsible for training the UK's next generation of world-class fighter pilots. On what is the Defence Secretary's first visit to the base, the UK Government Ministers will have the chance to meet some of the 2,210 regular UK Armed Forces personnel based in Wales and hear of their experiences on the Anglesey base and further afield.

With a total investment of £945 million from the UK Government's Ministry of Defence into Welsh businesses in 2016/17, Wales is now one of the most competitive places in the world from which to innovate, build business and deliver security. Speaking to commanders at RAF Valley and St Athan, UK Government Ministers will reinforce this vital support for the Welsh defence sector and outline their visions for its future.

## **Secretary of State for Defence, Gavin Williamson said:**

The 2,210 regular and 1,080 reservist Armed Forces personnel in Wales make a tremendous contribution to the security and prosperity of the United Kingdom. Wales is home to our 160 Brigade HQ, a light infantry unit, the fast jet pilot training school at RAF Valley and their ground engineering school at MOD St Athan, as well as vital training facilities around Brecon.

Defence invests £945 million each year with businesses in Wales supporting 6,300 jobs, from General Dynamics in Merthyr Tydfil, building armoured vehicles for the Army, to the high tech work of Qinetiq in Aberporth, and the Defence Electronics and Components Agency in Flintshire, which supports our new world-beating RAF F-35 fast jets.

## **Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns said:**

RAF Valley and St Athan are prime examples of how the UK defence sector not only protects us from global threats but also fosters prosperity, creating thousands of highly-skilled jobs and generating millions of pounds in exports.

After seeing first-hand the world-class talent, not only here in our bases but also as part of our ongoing deployment on the ground in Afghanistan, I am more determined than ever to secure and strengthen Wales' military footprint.

## **UK Government Minister for Wales, Nigel Adams said:**

The first-class training available at the bases across Wales is a true testament to the strength of the Welsh defence sector.

With Welsh-based soldiers, aircrew and sailors deployed worldwide the skill and expertise produced here can be seen and felt globally. The UK Government is committed to preserving Wales' reputation for producing military excellence and I look forward to working closely with the Defence Secretary to drive forward this success.

Following the visit to the two RAF bases, the UK Government Ministers will learn of the invaluable support provided to veterans in south Wales. Helping veterans to re-engage with their families and communities, Woody's Lodge provides a welcoming space for veterans to receive expert support and advice.

## **Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns said:**

Following the recent launch of the UK-wide Veteran's Strategy by the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Office, it is inspiring to visit an organisation that for many years has been working towards achieving some of the strategy's core aims here in south Wales.

Woody's lodge supports Veterans to face some of the wide variety of challenges and issues that Veterans can come across when they leave the armed forces. By visiting such organisations, the UK Government can gain a better insight into these challenges and ensure that we are fully informed to deliver a strategy that works.

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