

News story: UK and Norway defence ministers plan sub-hunting co-operation

Defence Minister Guto Bebb hosted Secretary Tone Skogen, State Secretary in Norway's Ministry of Defence, on her visit aboard a US Navy P-8A Poseidon aircraft – equipment which both the UK and Norway will soon own themselves.

The allies ramped up discussions around how the nations will work together and might deploy their submarine-hunting aircraft fleet in the future. Areas of co-operation could range from maintenance to training and operations, which would not only cut costs but also boost operational power in the North Atlantic, a key area of submarine activity.

The aircraft took off from RAF Lossiemouth, which will be the future home of the UK's fleet. Investing £3 billion in the capability over the next decade, the UK is buying nine of the Boeing-built aircraft, whilst Norway are getting five. Their key role for the UK will be to protect the country's submarine-based nuclear deterrent and its two new aircraft carriers – the Poseidons deploy sonobuoys to help them detect submarines, and can fire anti-ship missiles and launch torpedoes to destroy submarines.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb said:

These sub-hunters will take to the skies from RAF Lossiemouth and help us combat a range of intensifying threats, not least increasing submarine activity in the North Atlantic. We're investing £3bn in our own capability, but working alongside Norway takes this to a higher level. Not only could we cut costs by sharing training, spares and repair facilities, but we can patrol the seas together, meaning we've got more eyes and ears on any potential aggressors.

Norway's Secretary Tone Skogen said:

Norway and the UK are natural partners given our shared values, as well as our history and geography. We can even further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation related to high-end capabilities such as the F-35 fighter and the P-8 maritime patrol aircraft.

In my discussions with Guto Bebb, Minister for Defence Procurement, I find a like-minded ally. The UK and Norway continue to stand together in training and exercises in the North Atlantic and the Northern region, as well as operationalisation of the Joint Expeditionary Force.

The nine P-8A Poseidons will be based at RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland. Last month, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson cut the first turf on a £132m facility for the new fleet. The new facility will be completed in 2020, to coincide with initial operating capability of the Poseidon aircraft being available in the UK.

Built by Elgin-based Robertson Northern, it will comprise a tactical operations centre, an operational conversion unit, squadron accommodation, training and simulation facilities and a three-bay aircraft hangar.

At the peak of construction, the project will support 200 local jobs. When the fleet is fully operational, some 470 additional service personnel will be based at RAF Lossiemouth, taking the total number of people employed there to 2,200. Further roles are also expected when the training and support services are established at the new facility.

[Press release: Governments agree plans to work together on UK frameworks](#)

The ninth Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) met today in 70 Whitehall. The meeting was chaired by the Rt Hon David Lidington MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office.

The attending Ministers were:

From the UK Government: the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, Rt Hon David Lidington MP; the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, Rt Hon David Davis MP; the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP; the Secretary of State for Wales, Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP; the Secretary of State for Scotland, Rt Hon David Mundell MP; the Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP; the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, Robin Walker MP.

From the Welsh Government: the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford AM.

From the Scottish Government: the Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe, Michael Russell MSP.

Dr Andrew McCormick, Director General International Relations from the Northern Ireland Civil Service attended the meeting in the continued absence of a Northern Ireland Executive.

The Chair opened the meeting by summarising the constructive Ministerial and official level engagement that had taken place since the Committee last met.

The Secretary of State for Exiting the EU provided an update on negotiations, including the March meeting of European Council and the agreement reached on the terms of the Implementation Period. The Committee discussed the UK Government's paper on the Devolved Administrations' role in the negotiations. The Committee noted this paper.

The Committee discussed the EU (Withdrawal) Bill.

The Committee noted the need for continued engagement on common frameworks and agreed plans for the next phase of multilateral official level discussions in a range of areas where frameworks may be required, with progress to be considered at the next meeting.

Press release: Statement from UK on President Abbas' comments

At a highly sensitive time in the region, when we must all look forwards and work urgently towards a resolution of the longstanding issues between Israel and the Palestinian people, the fundamentals of peace cannot be built on views of the Holocaust which fly in the face of history. Palestinian President Abbas's comments at the Palestinian National Congress were deeply concerning. Any attempt to justify or explain away any element of the Holocaust is unacceptable.

President Abbas has shown a commitment to non-violence and a two-state solution. But his recent rhetoric does not serve the interests of the Palestinian people and is deeply unhelpful to the cause of peace.

News story: Professor Lynn Gladden selected as Executive Chair of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Professor Lynn Gladden, CBE, FRS, FREng has been selected to take up the new role within UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) in October in succession to Professor Philip Nelson who will step down at the end of September.

Professor Lynn Gladden is currently Shell Professor of Chemical Engineering

at the University of Cambridge. Professor Gladden is internationally recognised for her work on magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) methods which have benefited a wide array of industrial processes and contributed to a range of products and process technologies across multiple sectors.

UKRI is the main mechanism that promotes the UK's unrivalled strengths in research and innovation both at home and around the world, and is at the core of our modern Industrial Strategy to ensure that we continue to make the most of our world-leading R&D sector and provide support for our researchers and scientists.

EPSRC is the UK's main funder for research across the engineering and physical sciences. EPSRC supports excellent, long-term research and high-quality postgraduate training, in order to contribute to the economic competitiveness of the UK.

Professor Gladden said:

EPSRC science delivers world-leading, original thinking in mathematics, physical sciences and engineering that transforms the world we live in, and I am honoured to have been selected to be its new Executive Chair.

This is an exciting time to lead EPSRC. In particular, the formation of UK Research and Innovation offers opportunities for EPSRC science and thinking to expand into new fields through collaboration with partner Councils, and to explore new ways of working to deliver the UK's Industrial Strategy.

Sir Mark Walport, UKRI CEO, said:

Professor Lynn Gladden is a world-leading chemical engineer. Her ground-breaking work in academia coupled with her strong collaborations with industry makes her the ideal candidate to lead EPSRC and ensure the wider success of UK Research and Innovation.

Lynn will build on the successes of her predecessor, Professor Philip Nelson, who I would like to thank for his exceptional leadership of EPSRC over the last four years and the crucial role he has played in the creation of UK Research and Innovation.

Professor Gladden is Shell Professor of Chemical Engineering in the Department of Chemical Engineering & Biotechnology at the University of Cambridge. Her research has focussed on advancing magnetic resonance imaging techniques, originally developed for use in the medical environment, and using them in engineering research to gain greater understanding of the physical and chemical phenomena that determine the performance of chemical processes and their resulting products. In addition to her own research, Professor Gladden has held a number of research oversight roles in the UK and

abroad, and has also been Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research at Cambridge. She is currently a Judge for the Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering.

[News story: Civil news: notification letters for HPCDS tender bids](#)

We have started to notify organisations of the outcome of their tenders to deliver work under the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme (HPCDS).

This follows:

- the passing of the deadline for tenders for HPCDS contracts on 11 December 2017
- notifications sent to bidders in January 2018 telling them whether they had been shortlisted for HPCDS contracts

This is earlier than we stated in the Information For Applicants. However, we did say that if we could conclude the assessment earlier then we would notify applicants as soon as possible. This was set out in our tender update of 28 February 2018.

How will these notifications be made?

We will use the e-Tendering system from 3 May 2018 to start notifying organisations shortlisted for the next stage of the tender process back in January.

There are four scheme areas where the assessment process is ongoing and we will not be notifying the outcomes at this time. Applicants in the affected areas have been contacted to confirm this and will be notified of the outcome as soon as possible.

With the exception of these scheme areas, we expect notification to have been completed by Tuesday 8 May 2018. Applicants who have bid for HPCDS contracts and have not been notified by Wednesday 9 May should contact us through the e-Tendering message board.

When will services begin?

Services under new HPCDS contracts will begin on 1 October 2018.

How long will the contracts last?

Each contract will initially run until 30 September 2021, with an option for the LAA to extend for up to a further 2 years.

What will happen next?

Following notifications, the LAA will work with successful organisations to complete the verification process described in the letter of notification through the Bravo system.

However, organisations are reminded that contract awards are conditional on satisfactory bid verifications. Each applicant is responsible for providing all the necessary evidence they meet the verification requirements as out in the notification letter.

Further information

[Civil 2018 contracts tender](#) – to find out more about the tender process