

# Government to bring forward amendments to Legacy Bill following months of engagement

Press release

The UK Government has announced its intention to bring forward amendments to legislation seeking to address the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.



In recent months, the Government has engaged extensively with stakeholders, including victims and survivors in Northern Ireland. The Government has now confirmed it will introduce amendments at Lords Committee Stage that seek to address many of the concerns raised.

The Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill, which has its Second Reading in the House of Lords today (Wednesday 23 November), seeks to deliver better outcomes for those most impacted by the Troubles, including victims, survivors and veterans, while helping society to look forward.

The Government amendments will:

- Confirm that the Independent Commission for Reconciliation & Information Recovery (ICRIR) established by the legislation will be able to conduct criminal investigations where it judges that to be appropriate.
- Ensure that individuals who knowingly or recklessly provide false information to the ICRIR can be prosecuted and have their immunity revoked.
- Disapply the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998 for individuals who choose not to tell the Commission what they know and are then convicted of an offence so that they face a full, rather than reduced, sentence.
- Increase the fine for non-compliance with the Commission.
- Strengthen the Commission's independence by making clear that the Secretary of State should consult individuals before appointing the Chief Commissioner.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Chris Heaton-Harris MP, said:

The UK Government understands how important addressing the legacy of the past is for Northern Ireland, and is determined to deliver better outcomes for those most impacted by the Troubles, including victims and survivors, as well as veterans.

I have been clear that the Government would consider changes to this Bill seriously. The changes announced today reflect the significant engagement that has taken place on the Bill, and seek to address concerns that have been raised by many stakeholders.

I also recognise that, even with these changes, this Bill will remain challenging for many, and that concerns will remain. The Government remains absolutely committed to constructive engagement with all interested parties on these concerns, and how they might be addressed, as the Bill continues its passage through Parliament.

He added: "We must also recognise that a perfect solution to such an intractable issue is not attainable, and work constructively towards the best possible solution that works for those most impacted by the Troubles and helps society to look forward.

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## [\*\*SIA publishes sector profile on recruitment and retention in the security guarding sector\*\*](#)

News story

The Security Industry Authority has published a 'snapshot' profile of the security guarding sector. It draws on findings from recent surveys and past research conducted by the SIA. It also uses data from the SIA's licensing

system.



Security Industry Authority

Responses to surveys undertaken by the SIA suggest that some companies within the sector have found it difficult to recruit and retain security guards. Business demand is increasing post-pandemic but pay is not rising at a rate that helps to attract and retain staff.

Responses also suggest that some of the barriers to recruitment and retention are:

- low pay
- work patterns (unsociable hours)
- lack of flexibility, which is a barrier to attracting those with caring responsibilities (particularly women) to the industry
- overcapacity and saturation of employment within local areas means fewer people are applying for jobs
- high levels of verbal and physical violence in the workplace
- lack of career pathways and progression opportunities

The SIA has published a [full report on the GOV.UK website](#).

This report is the second in a series of private security industry profiles undertaken by the SIA. The first report, published in July 2021, focussed on [recruitment and retention in the door supervision sector](#).

Further information:

- The Security Industry Authority is the organisation responsible for regulating the private security industry in the United Kingdom, reporting to the Home Secretary under the terms of the [Private Security Industry Act 2001](#). The SIA's main duties are the compulsory licensing of individuals undertaking designated activities and managing the voluntary Approved Contractor Scheme.
- For further information about the Security Industry Authority or to sign up for email updates visit [www.gov.uk/sia](http://www.gov.uk/sia). The SIA is also on [LinkedIn](#) [Facebook \(Security Industry Authority\)](#) and [Twitter \(@SIAuk\)](#).

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## [New UK astronauts unveiled](#)

The UK has a new career astronaut, a parastronaut and a reserve astronaut, following a rigorous selection process and record UK Space Agency investment in the European Space Agency (ESA), announced in Paris today (Wednesday 23 November).

Rosemary Coogan was selected by ESA as the UK's third ever astronaut after Tim Peake and Helen Sharman, while former Paralympian John McFall becomes the first ever astronaut with a physical disability from the UK. Meganne Christian successfully completed the astronaut selection process and will become a member of the ESA Astronaut Reserve.

They are among the first astronauts to be unveiled by ESA since 2009. Just over 22,500 people applied for the astronaut call, launched last year, including 2,000 from the UK, while 257 people applied to the call for astronauts with a physical disability.

[The announcement](#) was made at the conclusion of the ESA Council of Ministers meeting in Paris where the UK Space Agency committed £1.84 billion of funding to new missions and programmes.

Science and Space Minister George Freeman said: George Freeman said:

Tim Peake's Principia mission showed us all how space has the power to inspire millions across the country, showcasing the UK's role as a space science superpower. "Today's announcement of the next set of UK ESA astronauts is a sign of international respect for both UK space scientists and the UK's commitment to space for all.

Just as sport is the ultimate test ground of human endeavour on land, space represents the ultimate testbed for science and technology. "Just as London 2012 Paralympic Games changed the global profile of Paralympics, so space is the ultimate environment to show our commitment to the values of shared endeavour for the good of humanity and the planet. "I congratulate Rosemary, John and Meganne on their remarkable achievement and look forward to them inspiring a new generation.

Astronauts on board the International Space Station support hundreds of experiments. This research helps develop new materials and medical treatments and gives a better understanding of fundamental scientific processes. It also provides the knowledge required to send humans further out into space, to the Moon and one day onto Mars.

Astronauts also take part in research as human test subjects, studying the

effects of space on the body to help researchers understand ageing processes that affect us all on Earth.

Rosemary Coogan will join the ESA astronaut corps along with four other new career astronauts from ESA member states.

Rosemary Coogan

The call for candidates with physical disabilities was a world first and was open to those with a lower limb deficiency or who are considered to be of short stature and met other recruitment criteria. ESA plan to invest in the necessary adaptations of space hardware to enable them to serve as crew members on a space mission.

The successful candidates have all undergone a process of screening, psychological, practical, and psychometric testing, medical selections and interview selections.

Rosemary Coogan and her fellow new career astronauts will report to ESA's European Astronaut Centre (EAC) in Cologne, Germany, where they will start basic training activities in 2023. Lasting a year and a half, the new recruits will go through an intensive training session, including the physics of spaceflight, new languages, survival training, and how to fly spacecraft. This will be followed by mission specific training that can take up to two years, once assigned to a mission.

John McFall will be an essential part of a feasibility study to find out what needs to be changed, for example in the spacecraft or on board of ISS, to fly safely.

John McFall

This is also the first time ESA has established an astronaut reserve, which is composed of the candidates who were successful throughout the entire selection process and were not recruited.

They will receive a consultancy contract from ESA, while remaining with their current employers

Dr Paul Bate, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

This is a momentous day for the UK Space Agency, our space sector and the country as a whole. Through our investment in the European Space Agency, the UK is playing a leading role in space exploration and collaborating with international partners to use the unique vantage point of space to benefit life on Earth.

Space has an incredible power to inspire and I am sure Rosemary, John and Meganne will become heroes for many young people and

inspire them to shoot for the stars. It's also important to remember that, behind every astronaut, there is a dedicated team of people, including in the UK, working behind the scenes to achieve the incredible.

Meganne Christian

The position of astronaut is just one possible career path in the UK space industry, which generates £16.5 billion a year and employs 47,000 people in various roles from aerospace engineers, satellite technicians, research scientists to entrepreneurs and lawyers.

European Space Agency Astronaut Class of 2022

As set out in the [National Space Strategy](#), the European Space Agency remains a close multilateral partnership for the UK.

Research shows every £1 invested in ESA [generates an overall return of £11.80](#) for the UK economy.

The UK Space Agency has been a member of the ESA human exploration programme since 2012, and today invested £1.84 billion at ESA's Council of Ministers meeting in Paris.

In 1989 Helen Sharman became the first British astronaut when she was selected for the Project Juno. In May 1991, Sharman spent eight days in space and became the first female astronaut to visit the Mir Space Station.

Tim Peake was the first British recruit through the ESA astronaut programme in 2009. His six-month Principia mission to the International Space Station launched on 15 December 2015.

There were over 250 scientific experiments on board the ISS during Tim Peake's mission and he underwent regular testing to record the effect of space and zero-gravity on his bones, muscles and organs – research to help inform crewed space missions in the future, including possibly to Mars. Peake was also the first UK astronaut to undertake a spacewalk.

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## [Defence Procurement Minister, Make UK Defence Summit speech](#)

It's a pleasure to be here in Birmingham today for this Make UK Defence

summit.

Before continuing I should formally introduce myself – I've been the Minister for Defence Procurement for around a month now.

As was just touched upon, unlike my ministerial colleagues in the department, I have a legal rather than a military background.

Which means I bring two things, I hope, to Defence.

First, an understanding of – and deep respect for – the rule of law. When we see the atrocities being committed in Ukraine, as unlawful as they are heinous, we are reminded how important it is to protect the rules-based international order, but also to do so with hard edged military assistance if required.

Second, I bring an open mind and a willingness to listen and learn from you. I'm not coming in with any preconceptions, other than this, I believe very passionately in small business and I believe it is in your interest and the nations interest that you get a fair shot when it comes to defence procurement.

That is particularly so in an era that is described by some as "a Golden Age of innovation". That is digital innovation but other innovation, new ways of management, how to manage data.

And let me say this too as an overarching way of principle. I come to this job very conscious of the advantages that come with speed of procurement and the risk that come with delay.

Perfect is the enemy of the good and 80% capability today is very often preferable to 100% capability tomorrow if tomorrow never comes.

There are so many examples of firms of all sizes giving us a crucial defensive advantage in this part of the world alone.

There's the team at Birmingham Airport who are converting Boeing 737s into E-7 airborne early warning aircraft.

There's the work being undertaken in Telford to manufacture Boxer armoured vehicles.

And all the exciting small businesses in this region who we will be championing next weekend on Small Business Saturday.

Take for example the Coventry-based SME Hygiene Pro Clean who – with help from our Defence and Security Accelerator which provides access to over £250 million in excess funding – won a contract with the Welsh Ambulance Trust to roll out their rapid cleaning system to speed up the decontamination of ambulances during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

So, it's no surprise our current defence spend in the West Midlands is about £120 for every person living here.

But the important work of the SME work stretches beyond the boundaries of Birmingham and the Black Country.

As we battled the pandemic, we saw the entire Defence supply chain step up to produce ventilators, build Nightingale hospitals and move millions of pieces of equipment around the country.

More recently, it's been fantastic to see firms pulling together nationwide to get vital defensive weaponry into the hands of Ukrainians as quickly as possible.

And that takes me onto the third thing I want to do this morning and that is to set out my priorities for this role.

But before I do that, it's worth reminding ourselves of the context in which Defence is currently operating.

First, the threats we face as a nation are proliferating and intensifying.

Whether it's state-on-state aggression like we are seeing in Ukraine.

Or so-called sub-threshold dangers, including disinformation campaigns, cyber warfare and the sabotage of undersea cables.

Meanwhile, the global pandemic, the energy crisis and ongoing impact of climate change have not just increased the demands on our forces, but imposed additional demands on our resources.

Which means – as the Chancellor made clear in his financial statement last week – we need to deliver the maximum value for money, we need to deliver the maximum punch for our pound so to speak.

As a result, your role as suppliers to our armed forces is more important than ever.

Not just in keeping our forces equipped with everything they need, not just providing that innovation, technology, and cutting-edge capability which keeps us ahead of our adversaries, but through your achievements strengthening the entire sector so that no matter what happens, when the call comes, our nation is ready to respond.

Let me also say by way of context, that where there are challenges there are also great opportunities for firms like yours to expand into new markets.

Nations across the world are reawakening to the value of Defence.

France, Australia, the United States and Germany, of course, are among the countries to have increased their Defence spending in the last year.

That means we are now looking at a Defence export market potentially worth many billions of pounds more over the next decade.

So, how are we going to grip this moment and seize this opportunity?

Well, the good news is that we aren't starting from scratch – this is the third bit of context.

Most of you will be well acquainted with the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy – better known as DSIS.

Launched under one of my predecessors Jeremy Quin, DSIS marked a step-change in our approach to industry.

It means we now think about defence industry as a national strategic capability in its own right.

It means we are considering the much broader impacts of our commercial decisions, such as how we can boost regional economies, how we can develop new skills bases, and how we can develop national industrial capability.

But publishing any strategy is of course only the beginning, it is delivery that really counts.

We've been working alongside industry to deliver on over 50 commitments during the last year and a half.

Driving innovation, improving efficiency, and strengthening the entire sector.

Now, we need to build on that success and create Defence supply chains which are truly fit for this new, more competitive and unstable era.

So, turning to those priorities, they are only threefold:

First, we want to see a more resilient supply chain.

In this new era of global competition, we must make ourselves agile and resilient by design.

That's why last week we launched our new Supply Chain Strategy, the first in over a decade. You will be hearing from Major General Simon Hutchings who will cover in more detail our approach to that strategy.

But in a nutshell, this is a clear mandate to do things differently to maximise the resources at our disposal.

That means moving away from an exclusive focus on cost-cutting and efficiency savings.

And instead considering reliability, through-life service and environmental sustainability as part of the package too.

We're also going to prioritise in ensuring supply chains are flexible enough to cope with sudden disruption.

And we want to work closer than ever with you, our industrial partners, to build genuinely collaborative relationships.

Including by having better visibility of firms – the SME and mid-tier companies – in that critical supply chain.

And doing so by sharing more information because that allows us to make better decisions.

And that brings me onto my second objective; greater collaboration with SMEs.

Now, perhaps more than ever we need SMEs to play their proper part in this national mission and I am personally committed to that goal.

So where have we got to?

Last year 23% of our procurement budget went to SMEs – that's a procurement budget of over £20 billion a year – that's up from 13% in 2016/17.

But we want to go further and we are targeting 25% for next year. That's a bold but important ambition.

Now I recognise, even after a few short weeks in this post, that smaller suppliers face unique challenges like 'barriers to entry' as economists sometimes refer to them.

And that is why we are determined to make the barriers to working with us as low and as navigable as possible.

At the heart of that determination is our SME Action Plan, published in January.

Setting out how we're maximising SMEs' opportunities to do business with us.

Take for example our £16 million Defence Technology Exploitation Programme – it's offering grants up to £500,000 to help SMEs develop new technologies and processes.

Meanwhile our new Procurement Reform Bill is helping SMEs by slashing the number of complex regulations which govern public procurement.

But we have also created a new single supplier registration system, which means bidding companies will only have to submit their core credentials once, making it cheaper and easier for you to work with us too.

Another key part of the Action Plan is our new SME Working Group within the Defence Suppliers Forum – which works closely with Make UK.

It brings together SMEs from across the country, to sit alongside primes and MOD representatives. It is already beginning to bear fruit.

During its first year, it's addressed the use of Framework contracts on Defence and how to measure our impact on the SME community.

So, to my third priority; boosting exports.

That's because partnerships are not just crucial on our own shores.

If we are going to capitalise on the massive potential export market that I eluded to earlier, we need to strengthen industrial ties with our global partners.

That's because that in turn enables greater information sharing, greater interoperability with our allies as I saw myself in the Mojave Desert a couple of weeks ago with our Australian and American allies, and it also enables greater strategic planning.

So, I want to drive better use of our strong and unique network of military officers, industry secondees and over 5,000 trade specialists.

Based across the UK and within 120 countries, they can help promote innovation, opportunity and partnership around the world.

We are also creating a more efficient system for managing any government-to-government relations in support of your exports.

Meanwhile the UK DSE Export Faculty is working with the wider Department for International Trade Export Academy to provide SMEs with advice and support.

So that's an overview of what we're doing and where we want to go.

There's a lot of different strategies and policies in there but the three most important words are ambition, resilience, and collaboration.

And that collaboration really matters because if we are to really succeed, if we are to grasp these opportunities of this era to make you thrive and to make us safe, we are going to need your support too.

So let us know what support you need to innovate and expand. Constructive engagement is welcome.

Let us grasp those opportunities on offer to turn your cutting-edge ideas into cutting-edge capabilities.

Let us seize the moment presented by excellent events like this, to meet new people and new business partners to strike up new business relationships.

Your success is our country's success and government will be willing you on.

Thank you.

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**[Work completed on Ouse Washes protects thousands of homes](#)**

Press release

Cambridgeshire property and land retain flood protection.



Environment Agency staff train with Jackson Civil Engineering to put the demountable flood barrier up

A multi-million pound project to raise the Middle Level Barrier Bank of the Ouse Washes Flood Storage Reservoir has been completed.

Following 6 years of construction, the project maintains the standard of flood protection to more than 2,000 properties and 67,000ha of agricultural land. The raising of the bank on the vitally-important reservoir was carried out between 2017 and this year.

As the Washes are an internationally-important habitat, construction work was carried out during summer and early autumn each year to avoid disturbing breeding and over-wintering birds. New bird hides were installed during the project to help visitors continue to enjoy this important landscape.

This summer, work was carried out to enable the installation of a demountable flood barrier outside the village of Welney. The barrier will be used to prevent water spilling from the reservoir into Welney village. It will replace the use of large sandbags to create a temporary barrier across Welney Wash Road, the A1101. The barrier will be installed when the water level in the reservoir reaches a predetermined level and the road has been closed by Norfolk County Council.

The works ensure compliance with recommendations made by the reservoir inspecting engineer under the Reservoirs Act 1975.

There will now be a further two years of maintenance at the site to establish grass cover. This is needed to ensure the stability of the newly-raised bank.

Nicola Oldfield, a project executive for the Environment Agency, said:

This has been a vital long-term investment and refurbishment programme.

We know the impact that flooding can have, which is why protecting people and communities is our priority.

The results of this work will help to protect thousands of homes and businesses in the area for years to come.

Everyone should know their flood risk and sign up for free flood warnings by going to <https://www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk> or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188. You can also follow @EnvAgency on Twitter for the latest flood updates.

- The total cost for this project was around £40 million.
- Between 2015 and 2020, we invested more than £1 billion on maintaining flood and coastal defences nationally. This included investing in developing technology and direct maintenance work such as dredging, inspecting assets, and carrying out repairs.

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