

# Defence Secretary visits Slovakia to discuss support for Ukraine

News story

Ben Wallace, the first Defence Secretary to visit Slovakia in over a decade, met with Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad in Bratislava for talks on how we can work even more closely to enhance our support.



Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and Slovakian Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad in Bratislava

The Defence Secretary visited Slovakia today (Mon 25 July) to meet his counterpart and discuss our joint work to support Ukraine and safeguard European security.

The UK and Slovakia have been working in lockstep to support Ukraine as it defends itself against Russia's illegal invasion. Britain was the first European country to supply military aid to Ukraine and recently announced plans to [send hundreds of drones and scores of artillery guns](#), while Slovakia was the first NATO ally to donate air defence systems and recently revealed it would send self-propelled howitzers to the country.

Ben Wallace met with Slovakian Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad in Bratislava to speak about what more can be done and how we work together going forward to enhance our support for Ukraine.

## **Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:**

Slovakia is a leader in Central Europe in standing up for Ukraine and resisting Russian aggression.

I was delighted to visit my good friend Jaroslav Nad today. Our bilateral meeting explored next steps in military aid to the conflict as well as British support to Slovakian defence.

Ben Wallace and Jaroslav Nad discussed other important topics during the one-day visit, including our joint work through NATO and efforts to counter Russian disinformation in Eastern Europe and promote peace and stability in the region.

They also spoke about how we might expand and deepen our historic defence partnership, which dates back to World War 2, when Slovak pilots served in the RAF and brave soldiers from the former Czechoslovakia, trained in the UK in cooperation with the Czechoslovakian government in exile in Britain, assassinated high-ranking Nazi Reinhard Heydrich.

Today, the UK and Slovakia have a close defence relationship which is growing, with cooperation in a number of areas such as through joint training and exercises, including the British Military Advisory Training Team (BMATT), which is delivering a course this month in Slovakia.

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## [Monkeypox case definition updated to include new symptoms](#)

### News story

In light of clinical experience during this outbreak, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is updating the case definition for monkeypox.



The [symptom list has been expanded](#) to include a single lesion or lesions on the genitals, anus and surrounding area, lesions in the mouth, and symptoms of proctitis (anal or rectal pain or bleeding), especially if the individual has had a new sexual partner recently. This will help both individuals and clinical professionals identify monkeypox symptoms.

The majority of people with monkeypox can safely manage their symptoms at

home and there have been no deaths in the UK. Most people experience mild disease but it can cause a significant illness in some, requiring hospitalisation, including for severe pain.

Meera Chand, Director of Clinical and Emerging Infections at UKHSA, said:

We continue to see new diagnoses of monkeypox, passed on primarily through close or sexual contact.

We have updated our case definitions to reflect the clinical presentations that have been seen during this outbreak. It is important to recognise that just one or two genital or anal lesions, or lesions in the mouth can be signs of monkeypox, especially if you have had a new sexual partner. If you think you have monkeypox, stay at home and contact 111 or your local sexual health service for advice.

There is still a need to be cautious and stay alert for symptoms. For many people symptoms can be mild but for some people, hospital treatment may be required.

Guidance and materials are being updated to reflect the new case definition and expanded symptoms list.

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## [Bank of England Bank Rate](#)

News story

The significance and impact of the Bank of England Bank Rate is the topic of our latest blog.



We explore the [importance of the Bank Rate](#), or base rate, as a tool for the Bank of England to control inflation. This base rate is just part of the Bank of England's role in maintaining monetary stability and overseeing the UK's financial functions.

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## [Sustainable farm-based protein competition opens](#)

The development of products such as methane reducing animal feeds and high protein crops have received a boost today (Monday 25 July) with Defra opening a £12.5m competition to support research and innovation.

Farmers, growers, foresters, businesses and researchers are invited to apply with projects to help increase domestic production of healthy and sustainable protein. The competition is part of the Government's £270 million [Farming Innovation Programme](#) being run in partnership with UK Research and Innovation's Transforming Food Production Challenge to help spark new ideas and collaboration across the sector.

The aim is to accelerate the development of novel and disruptive technologies to create new sources of resource efficient, low-emission proteins, leading to a more sustainable farming model for the future. This will help improve farming productivity, resilience in the sector and move existing agricultural sectors towards net zero.

Defra Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Steve Double, said:

Our farmers and food producers are the best in the world, and we want to encourage collaboration across the sector to help improve productivity and sustainability.

Food production and environmental protection are two sides of the same coin, it's why we are spending £270m to support farmers to innovate for the future through the Farming Innovation Programme.

Whether it's a game-changing animal feed that helps animals produce less methane or new high-protein crop, this competition is now open to support its development.

Katrina Hayter, Challenge Director for UKRI's Transforming Food Production Challenge, said:

When it comes to addressing the key issues of productivity and sustainability in the UK food sector, we're looking for applicants who are truly able to demonstrate and deliver – and on-farm protein production is no different. It's vital that new technologies disrupt the status quo, bringing with them measurable improvements to the environmental impact of food production and more sustainable models for the future. We're looking forward to working with applicants and supporting those who can truly move the needle forwards with new farm-based protein solutions.

This competition is split into 'Feasibility' projects (up to 2 years), and 'Industrial Research' (up to 5 years for breeding projects). Projects must have a value of £200k-£500k and £500k-£1m respectively.

Altogether, Defra expects to spend around £600 million on grants and other support for farmers to invest in productivity, animal health and welfare, innovation, research and development over the next 3 years.

Guidance on how to apply is available at the following links:

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## **[Seddon Construction Ltd latest to come on board with partners at Sellafield Ltd](#)**

Seddon Construction Ltd has been appointed to deliver the building fit-out requirement, through a fourth framework agreement worth £175 million over the next 17 years, until March 2039.

The building fit-out package is the fourth key delivery partner supplier framework to be awarded by the Programme and Project Partners, as part of a major programme of procurements to support the long-term delivery of major decommissioning infrastructure on the Sellafield site.

The framework includes general construction activities such as: internal walls, ceilings, screeding, flooring, painting and joinery.

John Shannon, divisional director of Seddon Construction Ltd, said:

This an excellent appointment for us as a key delivery partner for the Programme and Project Partners.

This opportunity will ensure that we can develop long term and effective relationships with other stakeholders, delivering effective outcomes on the Sellafield site, whilst contributing to both the community and regional economy positively.

Head of supply chain, Project and Programme Partners, Peter Hogg added:

We're very pleased to announce our fourth long-term work partnership. This company has never worked 'inside the fence' at Sellafield before and that's why the Project and Programme Partners model is different.

It's providing opportunities to organisations that we have not worked with before, which can provide innovative solutions to meet our long-term needs.

This collaboration, together with Seddon's supply chain will ensure enhanced project delivery and increased social impact and economic benefits for our communities.

The framework has been procured under the partners multi project procurement (MPP) model which encourages long-term collaboration throughout the supply chain, enhanced project delivery, and paves the way for greater social and economic impact in the West Cumbria region, with Seddon planning to open an office in West Cumbria.

The MPP model is seeing the appointment of key delivery partners to deliver work packages covering everything from groundworks and general civils to steelwork and cladding.

The partners will work closely with all key delivery partners to deliver Sellafield Ltd's purpose to create a clean and safe environment for future generations, improve sustainability and ensure better outcomes for the local economy and communities.