

## Construction under way on Qioptiq's new £3.7m facility expansion will ensure £82m MoD contract will be delivered on time.

The start of work was officially launched today (Thursday June 22) at a ground breaking event with Economy Secretary Ken Skates, Qioptiq MD Peter White and representatives from Read Construction which secured the design and build contract.

The Welsh Government is investing £1.7m to build the 24,900 sq. ft. secure facility on land it owns adjacent to Qioptiq's existing premises on St Asaph Business Park. The development is due to be completed by the end of the year when Qioptiq will lease the building and invest c£2m in fit out, security and IT systems, bringing the total investment to £3.7m.

Ken Skates said:

"Winning this key contract was a huge coup for the company and for Wales and reflects the expertise of its highly skilled workforce. It's great to see work is now underway as this expansion will create on-going economic benefits for the region and secure the long term sustainable future of this advanced manufacturing company in Wales.

"Excelitas' Qioptiq is a key Anchor company, a major employer in North Wales and one of the most innovative and dynamic businesses in Wales. The Welsh Government supported Qioptiq's successful bid from the early pre-qualification stage and our continued support and investment in these new facilities will ensure the company has the capacity it needs to deliver such a significant contract."

Under the six year MoD contract Qioptiq will be the sole strategic supplier for the MoD's entire fleet of Surveillance and Target Acquisition equipment – it will supply and maintain more than 280,000 items of highly sensitive optical equipment.

Qioptiq MD Peter White said

"A contract like this provides security and allows us to invest in the infrastructure and our people because we can take a long-term view. This in turn helps the local economy and our supply chain."

He went on to say:

“Sometimes you can take for granted the sense of community that we have at Qioptiq. When customers visit, they always comment on the passion and dedication that the workforce shows and that is an important factor in winning contracts such as this.”

Read Construction aim to ensure maximum spend within the local area through the appointment of local design team members, suppliers and subcontractors and will also be providing training opportunities for local people.

Dawid Cloete, Construction Director, said:

“We are delighted to be delivering this significant project for the region, in conjunction with Welsh Government and Qioptiq. Throughout the project we will endeavour to promote local employment opportunities and deliver added value through the employment of a local supply chain.”

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## Child poverty still on Welsh Government agenda

Addressing Children in Wales’s Child Poverty Conference, the Cabinet Secretary reaffirmed the Welsh Government’s commitment to eradicating child poverty.

He said the focus on employability, early years and empowerment has put far greater emphasis on those areas which support children to have the best start in life.

This approach has seen increasing investment in initiatives which are key to preventing and reducing poverty, delivering a more equal and prosperous Wales.

While recognising that more needed to be done the Cabinet Secretary said the Welsh Government is making progress towards achieving its child poverty objectives in a number of areas.

Carl Sargeant said:

“Employment in Wales is close to a record high and the number of children living in workless households is at an all time low. We have reduced the gap in educational attainment between pupils eligible for Free School Meals and those who are not, exceeding our target for pupils achieving the expected level at Foundation

Phase.”

The Cabinet Secretary said early childhood experiences are important for a child’s long-term development and their achievements in later life which is why a focus on early intervention and prevention is important, particularly in respect of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Carl Sargeant added:

“Tackling poverty is the responsibility of every Cabinet Secretary and every Minister. While we do not underestimate the scale of our challenge, we must also recognise the opportunities available.”

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## **News story: Angelina Jolie visits British military team in Kenya**

This specialist instructional course hosted by the IPSTC is funded by the UK’s Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and delivered with the support of the British Peace Support Team (East Africa). Ms Jolie’s visit to the region has two distinct but complementary purposes: to highlight the continued plight of Africa’s refugees, marked yesterday by World Refugee Day; and, to maintain momentum behind the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, with the day before (19 June) being the UN’s International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Ms Jolie participated in training delivered to military and police personnel involved in African Peacekeeping Missions who are often first responders following acts of sexual violence in conflict. She spoke to peacekeepers, police and civil society experts about their experience in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings and in their communities. She participated in discussions about how personnel on the course can lead the way in changing attitudes and improving understanding of sexual and gender based violence in their organisations. The Special Envoy also took part in a roundtable discussion on PSVI chaired by the British High Commissioner, Nic Hailey, before addressing students on the course.

Ms Jolie said:

It meant a lot to hear military gender advisors and officers say what they believe and what they want others to understand, that this is not simply about law and human decency. It is about military effectiveness. If civilians do not have confidence in you as peacekeepers your mission will not succeed. And while this

training is clearly only a beginning, it is the only way that we will begin to address the problems: working nation by nation to raise standards and increase effectiveness.



Angelina Jolie visited the International Peace Support Training Centre. Crown Copyright.

During the visit the Special Envoy spoke to two of the UK military's gender experts, Major Cleo Bigwood and Captain Kezia Jukes, who are attending the SGBV training at the IPSTC. Captain Jukes is currently deployed to South Sudan as part of the UK's support to the UN Peacekeeping mission in country, and Maj Bigwood will deploy to the Democratic Republic of Congo in October as the UN Mission's Gender Adviser. Both are an example of MOD efforts to increase military Gender Advisers, gender focal points, and female peacekeepers, as part of international Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments.

Maj Bigwood said:

This is a fantastic opportunity to share experiences and develop our knowledge on this vitally important topic that affects all levels of society. The British Army is investing personnel and its global experience into this effort.

In September last year Ms Jolie spoke at the UK-hosted UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial about the need to stamp out acts of sexual abuse by



peacekeepers and of the imperative for more female peacekeepers to enhance operational effectiveness and to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable, including women, are met by Peacekeeping Missions. The UK military's Gender Champion and lead for the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Initiative, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Gordon Messenger, welcomed the Special Envoy to London for the event and continues to work with her in the UK's efforts on WPS, PSVI and Gender.

Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Gordon Messenger said:

I am delighted that Ms Jolie has been able to visit this excellent training for African Peacekeepers and I am proud of the UK's supporting role. I commend the work of all those committed to International Peacekeeping efforts and thank them for their compassion, dedication and bravery in seeking to prevent violence and restore peace in some of the most challenging parts of the world.

The UK continues to lead internationally on ending sexual violence in conflict and Defence is working hard in support of its partners, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development, to refine and strengthen the UK's contribution to this most valuable work.



Angelina Jolie visited the International Peace Support Training Centre. Crown Copyright.

2017 marks five years since Ms Jolie and Lord William Hague founded the PSVI. Since 2012, over 17,000 Military and Police personnel have been trained on sexual violence issues, the PSVI Team of Experts has been deployed more than eight times. £40m in UK funding has been committed so far and we have supported over 70 projects across the world to help end sexual violence in conflict.

The UK's PSVI priorities for 2017/18 include challenging the stigma survivors of sexual violence experience; delivering justice for survivors, ensuring better access to healthcare, psychosocial support and livelihood programmes; and improving how security forces around the world prevent and respond to these crimes.

British High Commissioner to Kenya Nic Hailey said:

The UK is committed to ending the use of rape as a weapon of war. I was delighted that Ms Jolie was able to experience some of the training we provide through our team in Kenya.

We have trained 17,000 military and police personnel in preventing sexual violence around the world since 2012. But there is more to do. The UK looks forward to working with Kenya and other international partners to put an end to sexual violence in conflict.

In addition to supporting PSVI work, the BPST(EA)'s mission is to coordinate UK military assistance to Armed Forces in Eastern Africa, supporting security and stability in the region.

So far this year the team has already trained more than 500 Armed Forces personnel from African partner nations, and this number is expected to double by the end of 2017. BPST(EA)'s Training and Defence Engagement takes place throughout the region at various locations, primarily at the International Peace Support Training Centre in Kenya.

Commander BPST(EA), Colonel Richard Leakey said:

Today's event is a clear example of the UK's commitment to the PSVI, and the BPST(EA) is proud to play a part in that.

My team will continue to work shoulder-to-shoulder with our African and international partners to support security and stability in the region. Our training and Defence Engagement activity help make communities here safer.

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## **Press release: First new homes secured for victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster**

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid today (21 June 2017) announced that the government has acquired the first tranche of permanent new homes to rehouse local residents affected by the fire at Grenfell Tower.

The 68 flats are all newly built social housing and form part of the Kensington Row development in Kensington and Chelsea.

Work is ongoing to identify the needs of those affected who have lost their homes and match them to suitable housing. The expectation is that these new properties will be offered as one of the options to permanently rehouse residents from Grenfell Tower.

The increase to local social housing is a significant step towards meeting the government's commitment that every family from Grenfell Tower will be rehoused in the local area.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The residents of Grenfell Tower have been through some of the most harrowing and traumatic experiences imaginable and it is our duty to support them.

Our priority is to get everyone who has lost their home permanently rehoused locally as soon as possible, so that they can begin to rebuild their lives.

The government will continue to do everything we can as fast as we can to support those affected by this terrible tragedy.

More than 110 housing needs assessments have been completed to date and offers will then be made to families and this process will continue until every family has been housed.

Extra construction staff have been committed by the developer St Edward and working hour restrictions will be relaxed so work can continue around the clock to fast-track completion of the development to meet the increased demand in the area following the fire at Grenfell Tower. The government has also provided additional funding to fit out the flats to ensure they are ready for people to move in to sooner.

The new permanent housing is expected to be completed by the end of July. The Department for Communities and Local Government has also already committed to finding suitable accommodation in the local area for victims who lost their homes within a maximum of 3 weeks.

Each home will be fully furnished and completed to a high specification and St Edward will provide liaison staff for each block so that residents are fully supported in settling in to their new homes. This will be in addition to the ongoing range of support being provided to those affected by the tragedy.

The homes will be a mix of 1,2 and 3 bedroom flats across 2 blocks.

St Edward is a joint venture between the Berkeley Group and Prudential.