

Media Release: Defence Secretary hails Swindon's innovation following drone jobs boost

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Defence Secretary hails Swindon's innovation following drone jobs boost

Swindon has been praised for quickly establishing itself as a major defence tech hub, by the UK's Defence Secretary.

And John Healey MP says the town is building a strong reputation as the UK's leader in drone manufacturing.

Mr Healey made the comments following his visit to the Spectrum building in West Swindon last week where Portuguese firm TEKEVER announced it would be creating hundreds of high-skilled jobs as part of a £400m investment in British drone production and advanced AI warfare capabilities.

TEKEVER said it chose Swindon due to the town's growing position as a centre for UK drone activity and Mr Healey said he was impressed by the joint work of Swindon North MP, Will Stone, and Swindon Borough Council's inward investment team, which has seen fellow drone companies Flyby Technology, Munin Dynamics and STARK also announce they will be creating new jobs in the town.

The Council's success in attracting world-leading defence technology firms has seen it help shape national policy with the town referenced in the Government's Defence Industrial Strategy.

Mr Healey said: "Swindon is quickly becoming the UK's leading tech hub for drone manufacturing, which is great news for the town, bringing high-skilled jobs and boosting wider supply chains.

"The town has a proud reputation for innovation, playing a key role in the Second World War when producing Supermarine Spitfires. I'm pleased to see it once again stepping forward to support our defence industry and our national security with world-leading technology.

"These recent defence investments in Swindon are proof of a 'defence dividend' seen in good jobs and local growth. Swindon North MP, Will Stone, has been a fantastic advocate of the town's skilled workforce and has been working hard behind the scenes to encourage these defence firms to invest in Swindon with the support of the Council's inward investment team.

“I look forward to seeing production up and running in the near future as we make defence an engine for growth in Swindon and across the UK.”

As part of its announcement, TEKEVER also confirmed it would be working with the Borough’s schools and colleges to develop apprenticeship opportunities for young local talent.

Councillor Jim Robbins, Leader of Swindon Borough Council, said: “I’m personally delighted the Defence Secretary has recognised the Borough’s burgeoning reputation as a defence hub, which will significantly boost our economy and provide skilled jobs for local people.

“TEKEVER choosing to invest in Swindon is a huge endorsement of our decision to bring back a well-resourced inward investment team into the Council and we are really beginning to see that pay off with top companies recognising that Swindon is a great place in which to invest. We’ve also been working in tandem with our MPs and the Government to attract cutting-edge companies and the highly skilled jobs they bring with them.

“I’d like to thank Swindon North MP Will Stone, in particular, for helping us showcase Swindon’s strategic strengths and innovation potential so we build a strong reputation as a national leader in defence manufacturing.”

To build on the town’s growing standing as a defence centre of excellence, the Council and Will Stone also joined the Western Regional Defence and Security Cluster, which was recently launched at the world's largest biennial defence and security exhibition, DSEI.

North Swindon MP, Will Stone, added: “It was fantastic to welcome the Secretary of State for Defence John Healey for the launch of TEKEVER in Swindon.

“The Defence Secretary’s comments that Swindon is fast becoming the leading hub for drone manufacturing in the UK are a real boost to the work I and the Council’s inward investment team have been doing to attract drone companies to our town, building on our proud industrial heritage.

“These companies contribute more than bringing in well-paid advanced manufacturing jobs, they support the central mission of the Government to keep people safe and enhance our national security.

“Now with TEKEVER, STARK, Munin Dynamics and Flyby Technology we’re already bringing over 800 jobs to the town and I’ll be pushing to consolidate this expertise further to expand manufacturing and education within Swindon, through work with local colleges and apprenticeships. I’m really pleased we have the Government on board for this bold new direction for our town and I will continue to work toward a greater cluster of opportunity.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

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Images:

Picture 1: Defence Secretary John Healey (right) talking to Council Leader, Councillor Jim Robbins (middle), and Andrew Wells, the Council's Head of Inward Investment and Inclusive Economy at last week's TEKEVER announcement

Picture 2: Council Leader, Councillor Jim Robbins, getting a close up look at two of the drones TEKEVER will be producing in Swindon



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