

Defence and Security Blueprint for the Midlands

Led by the East Midlands County and
West Midlands Combined Authorities
Delivering on our Compact



CLAIRE WARD
MAYOR OF THE
EAST MIDLANDS



Mayor of the
West Midlands



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Harnessing our Compact for National Resilience

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Mayoral foreword

The global security environment is more uncertain than at any time in recent decades. Nations everywhere are strengthening their defence capabilities to protect sovereignty, safeguard supply chains, and maintain technological advantage. The UK is no exception, and the Midlands is ready to play its part.

The 2025 Compact between the East Midlands County and West Midlands Combined Authorities demonstrates our shared commitment to regional collaboration, with defence emerging as an early critical priority. By connecting assets and capabilities, the Midlands is building an integrated ecosystem that supports operational advantage, industrial resilience, and innovation.

But defence is not just about security - it is an engine for growth. Around the world, defence investment drives technological breakthroughs, creates high-value jobs, and strengthens communities.

The Midlands has powered Britain for centuries. Today, we stand ready to power the next generation of defence capability - creating opportunities that transform lives, revitalise places, and ensure prosperity reaches every part of our region.

This Blueprint sets out our initial response to the Strategic Defence Review and Defence Industrial Strategy, positioning the Midlands at the heart of national delivery - driving innovation, accelerating SME growth, developing a skilled workforce, and attracting investment.

We invite government, industry, and partners to join us in turning this ambition into action.

Defence is a national mission, and the Midlands is ready to lead.



Richard Parker
Mayor of the West Midlands
Combined Authority



Claire Ward
Mayor of the East Midlands
County Combined Authority

Executive summary

By 2035, the Midlands will be a globally recognised, innovation-led defence ecosystem - powering national security, economic growth, and inclusive opportunity.

This Blueprint translates the UK's Strategic Defence Review (SDR) and Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS) into regional delivery. It sets out a bold, practical plan to secure the Midlands' place at the heart of the UK's defence effort.

Our five strategic priorities:

- 1. Unlocking SME potential and strengthening supply chains** Building the UK's most agile and resilient defence SME ecosystem - simplifying procurement, improving visibility of opportunities, and embedding cyber resilience.
- 2. Building an inclusive, future-ready defence workforce** Connecting people to opportunity through inclusive pathways, specialist training, and deep industry-academic collaboration - creating a multi-generational skills legacy.
- 3. Driving innovation and dual-use capability** Positioning the Midlands as a national testbed for next-generation technologies - leveraging world-class R&D assets and accelerating dual-use innovation.
- 4. Mobilising investment for defence growth** Securing a Defence Growth Deal, attracting global capital, and embedding defence across high-value industrial zones - while leveraging major events like the Invictus Games to showcase innovation and inclusive growth.
- 5. Establishing governance for impact and delivery** Creating strong, industry-led structures to steer delivery - launching the Midlands Defence and Security Industry Council and empowering regional clusters.

Defending the nation is a generational responsibility. This Blueprint reflects our clear strategic intent and direction of travel - ambitious, collaborative, and focused on turning vision into reality. This is about the Midlands delivering for decades to come - creating jobs, fostering innovation, and strengthening national resilience while bringing communities along on the journey.

The following sections set out our initial priorities, actions, governance structures, and partnership models, with further detail to follow to ensure full alignment between the Midlands and the Defence Investment Plan.

1. Strategic context

Defence is a cornerstone of growth across the Midlands, embedded within the East Midlands and West Midlands Local Growth Plans published in 2025. Defence drives high-value jobs, advanced manufacturing, and innovation, while strengthening supply chains and developing the skills that underpin regional prosperity.

The Midlands Defence Blueprint is a direct response to the UK's Strategic Defence Review (SDR) and Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS). These frameworks call for a defence industry ecosystem that is resilient, innovation-led, and regionally empowered to support national and global security. The Midlands answers that call with a unified approach that connects national ambition to local delivery.

Our region's unparalleled industrial capability, advanced research and development (R&D) assets, and skilled workforce position the Midlands as critical to the UK's defence strategy. This Blueprint sets out how we will mobilise investment, strengthen supply chains, attract global companies, and accelerate innovation to meet the UK's operational and strategic needs.

Defending the nation is not a short-term mission, it is a generational responsibility. The Midlands is committed to this mission for the long-term, building a defence industry ecosystem that will serve the UK for decades to come. From nuclear propulsion to next-generation land systems, from cyber security to rehabilitation sciences, our capabilities are a strategic response to national priorities.

But defence is not just about technology and infrastructure - it is about people. Our commitment to defending the nation is also a commitment to our communities - creating pathways into high-skilled jobs, supporting regeneration, and ensuring that defence-led growth benefits every part of the Midlands.

This is the story of the Midlands: a region that has powered Britain's industrial strength for centuries and now stands ready to secure its future. By aligning with the SDR and DIS, we will ensure that every action in this blueprint contributes to national resilience, global competitiveness, and inclusive regional growth that brings communities along with us.

In 2025, the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) signed a Compact - a formal commitment to deeper collaboration. Growing our defence sector was identified as a critical early collective priority because it speaks directly to the nation's long-term security needs and the Midlands' unique ability to meet them.

Our ambition extends beyond this Compact to a Midlands-wide partnership, connecting specialist capabilities across areas including Lincolnshire, Warwickshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire and Leicestershire. By leveraging these strengths and activating networks such as Regional Defence and Security Clusters (RDSCs), we will create an integrated defence industry ecosystem - delivering innovation, industrial synergy, and operational readiness at scale.

Our activity aligns closely with Government priorities to support British jobs, industry, and innovation. We advocate for the clear, measurable commitments in the DIS and SDR, particularly regarding the regional distribution of Ministry of Defence (MOD) spend, SME engagement on procurement, and the boosting of investment through UK Defence Innovation (UKDI). This focus will ensure that Midlands-based companies, from cutting-edge SMEs to major manufacturers and their supply chains, are at the forefront of UK defence industry capability development that drives regional economic growth.



2. The Midlands' defence and security advantage

The Midlands is where Britain's industrial heritage meets the future of defence. From the heart of the UK, our region is powering the next generation of defence and security - combining world-class manufacturing, digital innovation, and cyber expertise to deliver for the nation.

The Defence and Security Industrial Strategy (DIS) recognises the East and West Midlands as a critical belt in the UK's defence industry ecosystem. This region offers unique supply chain strengths and a wealth of opportunities for companies to integrate into defence value chains - leveraging manufacturing excellence alongside rapidly advancing digital and cyber capabilities.

Our strengths are concentrated in complementary clusters aligned with DIS priorities:

West Midlands

- **Next-generation land capabilities:** Anchored by Babcock, NMS UK, and RBSL, supported by a robust component supply chain.
- **Dual-use sectors:** Future propulsion, power systems, and drone applications building on automotive and aerospace expertise.
- **Advanced manufacturing:** High-value capability for platforms and MOD supply chains.

East Midlands:

- **Propulsion and reactor technologies:** Centred on Rolls-Royce in Derby, supporting the UK's nuclear submarine fleet and developing the next generation of nuclear through the UK's small Modular Reactor (SMR) programme.
- **Dual-use sectors,** especially harnessing the East Midlands' clean energy, advanced manufacturing and MedTech strengths.

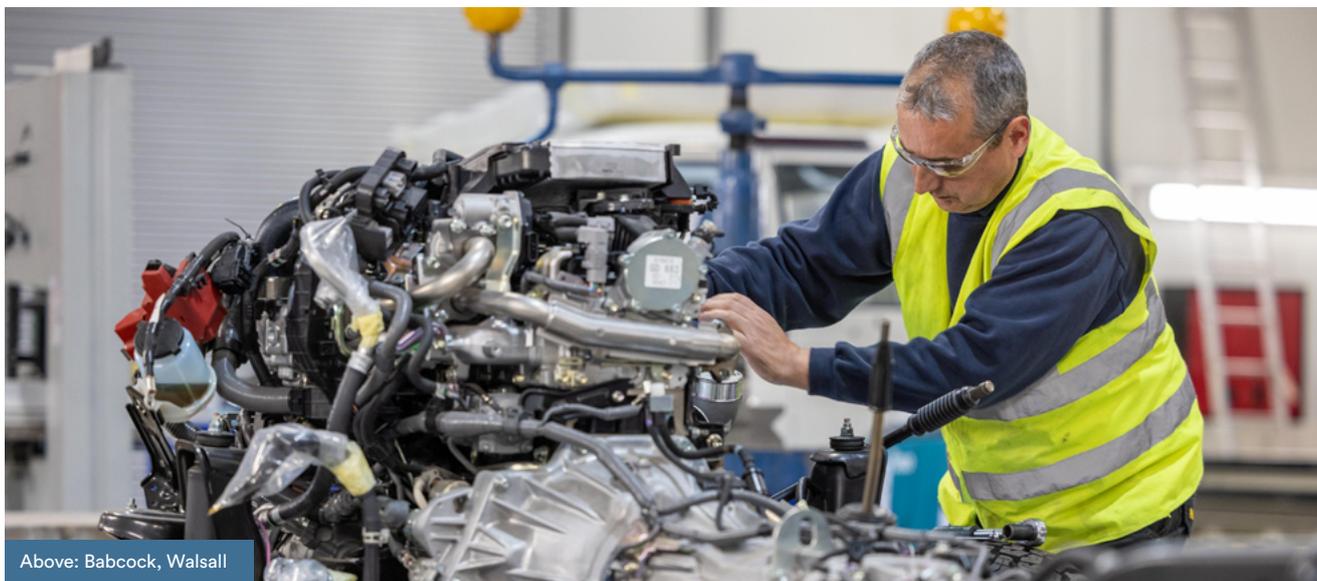
Compact wide:

- **Cyber security and digital information systems:** Underpinned by anchor institutions such as leading universities, the UK Telecoms Lab.
- **Combat air:** Driven by military aerospace expertise from Tier 1 suppliers Rolls-Royce, Moog, Parker-Meggitt, and Safran, supported by a deep and dynamic supply chain.
- **Defence rehabilitation:** Building on the region's clinical and academic excellence in trauma recovery, prosthetics, and rehabilitation sciences, and anchored by The Royal Centre for Defence Medicine and nearby National Rehabilitation Centre.
- **Supply chain resilience:** A robust network of suppliers and enabling services with significant potential for diversification.

We also recognise the strengths beyond our Combined Authority borders, such as in Lincolnshire (intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance), Worcestershire (cyber), Herefordshire (tactical mobility and intelligence), Leicestershire (space technologies) and Shropshire (armoured vehicles and weaponry). We are committed to working with partners across the Midlands to ensure a holistic, joined-up approach to delivering for the UK's defence and security needs.

The Midlands is not just responding to today's challenges - we are anticipating tomorrow's. Our region is investing in the skills, technologies and infrastructure needed to address emerging threats and opportunities, including:

- Artificial intelligence and autonomy
- Quantum technologies
- Space and satellite applications
- Resilient supply chains and advanced logistics
- Next-generation cyber security and secure communications
- Defence decarbonisation.



Above: Babcock, Walsall

Industry in the Midlands is supported by a collaborative and expert ecosystem of military establishments, cluster and sector bodies, R&D assets, and university strengths, including:

- East Midlands Cyber Security Cluster
- East Midlands Regional Defence and Security Cluster (RDSC)
- Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC)
- Medilink Midlands
- Midlands Aerospace Alliance (MAA)
- Midlands Cyber
- Midlands Innovation and the Energy Research Accelerator (ERA)
- HORIBA MIRA and MIRA Technology Park
- National Rehabilitation Centre (NRC), in Leicestershire.
- UK Telecoms Lab (UKTL)
- Tech West Midlands, including Cyber Special Interest Group.
- University strengths including at Aston, Birmingham, Coventry, Derby, Nottingham, Warwick and Wolverhampton
- Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG)
- West Midlands Regional Defence and Security Cluster (RDSC)

Accurate and agreed regional data on defence and security sectors is challenging to obtain due to definition issues. However, previous estimates from the Midlands Engine suggest that, across the whole Midlands, there are around **1,000 companies active in defence or adjacent sectors contributing substantial gross value added (GVA)**.¹ Across aerospace, defence, and security, ADS estimates nearly **50,000 people are employed in the wider Midlands - over 10% of the UK sector's workforce**.²

In addition, there are over 15,000 UK Regular Forces personnel³ across the Midlands: people at the heart of national resilience in the heart our communities.



Above: Somers Forge Ltd, Halesowen

3. Strategic priorities for growth and resilience

To secure the Midlands' position at the forefront of UK defence, we are setting out a bold blueprint for growth and resilience. Our five strategic priorities will unlock the region's full potential - building on our industrial heritage, embracing innovation, and ensuring readiness for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

Five priorities to drive forward Midlands defence

1. Unlocking SME potential and strengthening supply chains

We will strengthen Midlands supply chains and open defence opportunities for SMEs by simplifying contract access, modernising procurement, and improving visibility of opportunities - while supporting readiness and resilience across supply chains.

2. Building a future-ready defence workforce

We will build a future-ready defence workforce by aligning with national investment and leveraging Midlands strengths in advanced manufacturing, engineering, health and rehabilitation, and digital skills - creating inclusive pathways that connect people to opportunity and deliver multi-generational impact.

3. Driving innovation and dual-use capability

We will accelerate innovation and dual-use capability by leveraging major defence R&D assets, deepening university-industry collaboration, and connecting SMEs to the UK's defence innovation system - positioning the Midlands as a testbed for next-generation technologies.

4. Mobilising investment for defence growth

We will position the Midlands for the next wave of Defence Growth Deals, integrate defence into investment propositions, and attract global capital for opportunities in land systems, nuclear, and aerospace - while leveraging major events like the Invictus Games to showcase innovation and inclusive growth.

5. Establishing governance for impact and delivery

We will ensure effective delivery by launching the Midlands Defence and Security Industry Council and growing Regional Defence and Security Clusters, while partnering with MOD, wider government, and regional clusters within our Local Growth Plan frameworks.

4. Unlocking SME potential and strengthening supply chains

The Midlands is uniquely positioned to capitalise on national defence procurement reform and unlock greater value from our industrial base and SME ecosystem. As the SDR and DIS set out a more regionally inclusive and SME-friendly approach, the Midlands stands ready to lead.

With deep strengths in advanced manufacturing, engineering, and digital innovation, our region is home to thousands of SMEs embedded in adjacent sectors such as aerospace, automotive, and cyber. Yet, many face significant barriers to entering or scaling within defence markets - complex procurement processes, limited visibility of opportunities, and high entry thresholds.

Government reforms, including SME spending targets, regional investment, and segmented procurement models present a timely opportunity to address these challenges. But success depends on effective implementation on the ground, encouraging more firms to diversify into the defence sector, both domestically and internationally. Today, the MOD spends £124m annually with Midlands SMEs.⁴ Our ambition is bold: double this to £250m within five years.

Unlocking this potential also means embracing digital and cyber supply chains. Embedding “secure by design” principles across procurement will be critical to enabling Midlands tech firms to thrive and strengthening national resilience. At the same time, raising the baseline for cyber security across all suppliers is critical, for example upskilling companies through schemes such as Cyber Essentials Plus.

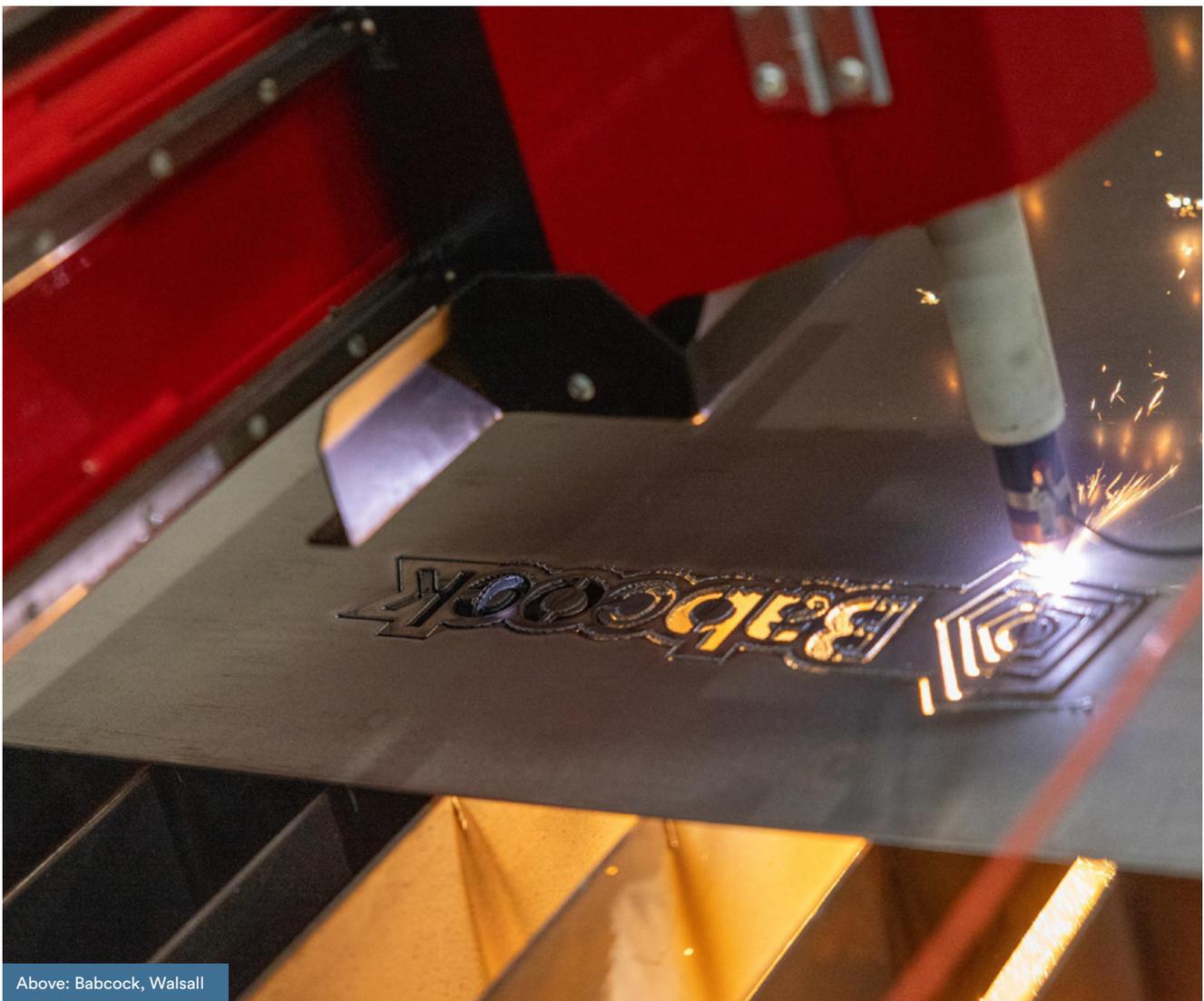
The Midlands also brings valuable experience in supply chain diversification, including through initiatives like the Supply Chain Transition Programme in the West Midlands and Aerospace Unlocking Potential, delivered by the Midlands Aerospace Alliance and University of Nottingham. These models can inform future defence-specific approaches, particularly in supporting firms to pivot into new markets and meet evolving standards.

Finally, building inclusive and sustainable supply chains will be essential for long-term resilience. This includes decarbonisation, creating space for underrepresented groups and non-traditional suppliers, and ensuring SMEs have visibility of investment opportunities and access to finance for growth.

Our actions

We will:

- Host supplier engagement days in partnership with MOD and industry, scaling up “meet the buyer” activity through bodies such as the Midlands Aerospace Alliance.
- Leverage segmented procurement models to open opportunities for SMEs via networks such as RDSCs and the Defence Offices for Small Business Growth and Export.
- Integrate defence into existing supply chain transition programmes and explore a dedicated defence readiness programme, working with primes as anchor companies.
- Explore options to help Midlands SMEs meet cyber security standards - such as Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus - by signposting existing regional support and identifying opportunities for future collaboration.
- Help align Midlands supply chain opportunities with the Defence Investment Plan by acting on specific opportunities that relate to Midlands capabilities.



Above: Babcock, Walsall

5. Building an inclusive, future-ready defence workforce

The Midlands is home to 48,500 high-skilled jobs across defence, aerospace, space, and security - representing 11% of UK sector employment.⁵ This figure will certainly grow, driving increased demand across the defence value chain, including in highly skilled engineers and scientists due to UK Defence Innovation (UKDI) investment in particular.

Rather than treating defence as a standalone sector, the Midlands is leveraging its industrial and skills strengths - advanced manufacturing, engineering, and digital - while expanding specialist capabilities in nuclear and health/rehabilitation. This aligns with the Skills England Defence Sector Needs Assessment, which highlights shortages in skilled trades (e.g., electrical engineers, welders), specialist roles (e.g., nuclear engineering), and digital/green skills.

To meet future demand, we will focus on specific areas for workforce development:

- 1. Advanced manufacturing and engineering:** including metallurgy, welding, electronics, materials and mechanical engineering, and leadership and management.
- 2. Digital and cyber:** including, software and systems engineers, data engineers, data analytics, AI and machine learning, cybersecurity, computing, and gaming.
- 3. Specialist skills:** including nuclear, battery technologies, aerospace engineering, and health / rehabilitation.

These priorities build on regional assets in our universities, institutes of technology, and specialist centres like the Nuclear Skills Academy (Derby), UK Battery Industrialisation Centre (Coventry), and West Midlands Rehabilitation Centre (Birmingham). However, persistent gaps remain in STEM and acute shortages in AI, cyber, and software disciplines. We must transform and transfer skills for the modern defence industry - creating multi-generational employment impact, for example through automotive-to-defence transitions in the West and energy-to-nuclear in the East.

We also recognise the importance of the Armed Forces Covenant and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme in supporting veterans, reservists, and service families. Both Combined Authorities are among nearly 15,000 proud Covenant signatories across the Midlands, promoting inclusive employment and helping veterans thrive in civilian life. Alongside our institutional excellence and the opportunity to host the Invictus Games in 2027, the Midlands can lead nationally in veteran support - driven by growth in defence industries and a shared sense of regional pride.

Our actions

We will:

- Drive defence-led regeneration to reconnect mid-career workers with high-value employment, focusing on deprived neighbourhoods and underrepresented communities.
- Co-develop targeted skills interventions with government, including:
 - Leveraging opportunities within the Skills Mission Fund to maximise shared investment.
 - Developing collaborative proposals for future defence technical excellence colleges.
 - Creating pathways for workers to pivot between defence and civil sectors.
- Align regional skills and careers offers with the national “Destination Defence” campaign, engaging schools, colleges, and cadet forces.
- Partner with Midlands universities to strengthen graduate pipelines into the defence industry.
- Champion inclusive employment practices by encouraging regional stakeholders to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme, including setting measurable targets for signatory growth.



Above: Mayor Claire Ward and Major Steve Goodwin, of the British Army

6. Driving innovation and dual-use capability

The Midlands is uniquely positioned to lead the UK's dual-use innovation agenda, leveraging its world-class ecosystem of universities, R&D centres, and industrial assets. Anchored by institutions such as the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC), HORIBA MIRA, and leading universities and companies, the region can accelerate the translation of defence research into commercially viable technologies with civilian applications.

Strengthening SME engagement is vital. By connecting agile Midlands SMEs to UKDI, Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL), and MOD innovation pipelines, we can unlock new capabilities and ensure innovation is challenge-led and market-responsive. There is also scope to embed defence innovation into existing regional programmes, supporting diversification and de-risking emerging technologies.

Dual-use innovation - particularly in advanced manufacturing, autonomy, AI, and cyber - aligns closely with *Defence Futures and Force Design* and other priorities such as the Defence Tech Scale Pilot and AI Investment Fund. The Midlands can also link with national space clusters and leverage capabilities in satellite communications, Earth observation, autonomous systems, and MedTech for rehabilitation and battlefield care.

The region is well placed to act as a testbed for next-generation defence and security technologies that also address civilian market needs - delivering national security advantage and regional economic growth.



Above: HORIBA MIRA Rapid Intervention Vehicle Development Programme

Our actions

We will:

- Maximise engagement with UKDI, exploring options for a Midlands-based innovation hub to anchor defence R&D, SME engagement, and dual-use technology development.
- Leverage the High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC) to deliver regional benefits from its MOD MoU, including joint demonstrators and SME access to its facilities.
- Support Midlands universities to deepen collaboration with DSTL through joint research calls, secondments, and innovation fellowships.
- Align regional innovation investment with defence and dual-use priorities, ensuring defence needs inform programme design.
- Integrate defence into high-growth clusters (e.g., aerospace, digital, EV/battery tech), identifying dual-use opportunities and attracting inward investment.



Above: MIRA Technology Institute Defence Training

7. Mobilising investment for defence growth

Defence must be embedded within wider investment programmes including improving public and investor perceptions of defence as a force for good, addressing concerns around responsible finance and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG). Securing new investment for the region will require a diverse mix of funders - from high street banks and private finance to the British Business Bank and Midlands Mindforge.

The recently announced £250m Defence Growth Deals offer a timely opportunity to channel investment into local places, creating agglomeration effects across clusters. The Midlands will position itself for future deals by showcasing its industrial strengths, connected sub-regional clusters, and alignment with initiatives such as the East Midlands Freeport, Investment Zones, and the Defence Investment Plan.

Global partnerships are key to maximising future investment. The Midlands will align with UK defence agreements - such as the Kensington Treaty and the Japan-UK partnership - and explore opportunities through HORIZON, opening doors for joint R&D, exports, and strategic collaboration. We will also build on focused events like Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) and the regionally-held Specialist Defence & Security Convention UK (SDSC-UK), which showcase regional capabilities to international markets. Looking ahead, the Invictus Games 2027 offers a unique platform to spotlight defence medicine, rehabilitation, and innovation while highlighting broader defence and security opportunities in the Midlands.



Above: SAFRAN Wolverhampton

Our actions

We will:

- Position the Midlands for a future Defence Growth Deal.
- Publish regional defence investment propositions to showcase our offer to global investors, and integrate defence into adjacent regional propositions and programmes.
- Leverage international partnerships, inward investment opportunities and events to attract global primes and innovators to the Midlands.
- Promote the Midlands as a defence-friendly region, improving perceptions and championing a more practical and supportive access to finance system for the sector.
- Align with international defence agreements and explore participation in UK and HORIZON initiatives for joint R&D and exports.
- Maximise the legacy of the Invictus Games 2027, by promoting Midlands leadership in defence medicine, rehabilitation innovation, and inclusive veteran support.



Above: SAFRAN Wolverhampton

8. Establishing governance for impact and delivery

Our governance approach is built on strong partnerships with government, industry, academia, and regional stakeholders to drive sustainable growth and national defence capability. In line with the DIS commitment to working with Mayoral Combined Authorities and local bodies, we will jointly mobilise activities that enable regional growth.

Central to this structure is the launch of the Midlands Defence and Security Industry Council (MDSIC) - an industry-led strategic forum co-chaired by Midlands Mayors alongside an industry chair. Its remit is to champion the region's defence and security industries, influence national policy, and guide delivery of priorities such as skills, supply chains, and innovation. Acting as the Midlands' link to national bodies like the Defence Growth Board, the Council will, from its inaugural meeting in early 2026, unite senior industry leaders, reflecting a diversity of voices, to position the region as a nationally significant hub for defence capability and growth - steering delivery of this Blueprint forward.

Operational delivery will, in part, come from Regional Defence and Security Clusters (RDSCs), linking MOD, industry, and academia. There are several of these across the UK, including the longstanding Lincolnshire RDSC and the 2025-lanched East Midlands RDSC, with the West Midlands to follow in 2026. These networks will implement the Midlands defence blueprint locally, supporting innovation, supply chain development, and workforce readiness. Delivery will also align with Local Growth Plans and the regional Compact Agreement, ensuring accountability.

We will leverage relationships with MOD, industry, universities, and innovation bodies to build a resilient defence ecosystem. Key enablers include the government's strategic partnership with the High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC), announced in the DIS, which brings advanced manufacturing capabilities to accelerate regional projects. Existing collaborations - such as WMCA's MoU with the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) and the "Team Derby" initiative around Rolls-Royce - create further opportunities to deepen impact across the Midlands. Connecting with local MOD sites and estates will also be critical to shaping workforce, infrastructure, and supply chain strategies.

Our actions

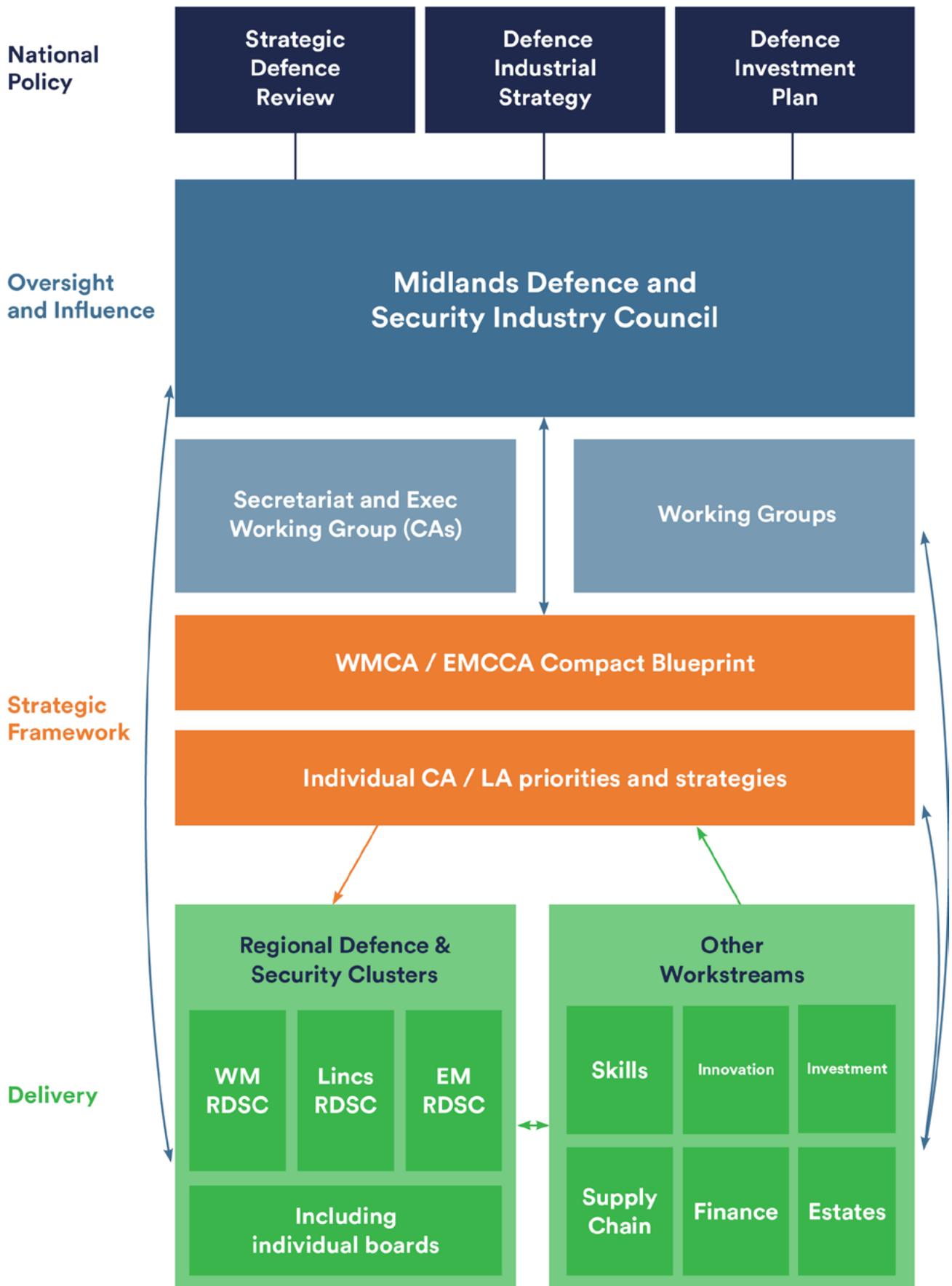
We will:

- Launch the Midlands Defence and Security Industry Council (MDSIC) - an industry-led strategic forum co-chaired by Midlands Mayors - to champion regional priorities, influence national policy, and oversee delivery of this Blueprint.
- Grow and operationalise Regional Defence and Security Clusters (RDSCs) in partnership with MOD, industry, and academia - driving innovation, supply chain development, and workforce readiness.
- Embed defence priorities into Local Growth Plans and regional investment strategies, ensuring alignment with cluster development programmes.
- Work with MOD and wider government to develop the Midlands Defence Belt - a coordinated corridor of capability, innovation, and investment across the region - initiative further.
- Work with local MOD sites and estates to plan workforce pipelines, align estate upgrades with regional regeneration priorities, and help local SMEs access defence supply chain opportunities.
- Strengthen strategic partnerships with MOD, industry primes, universities, and innovation bodies to coordinate delivery, share intelligence, and maximise regional impact.



Above: NMS UK, Leamington Spa

Midlands Defence Framework



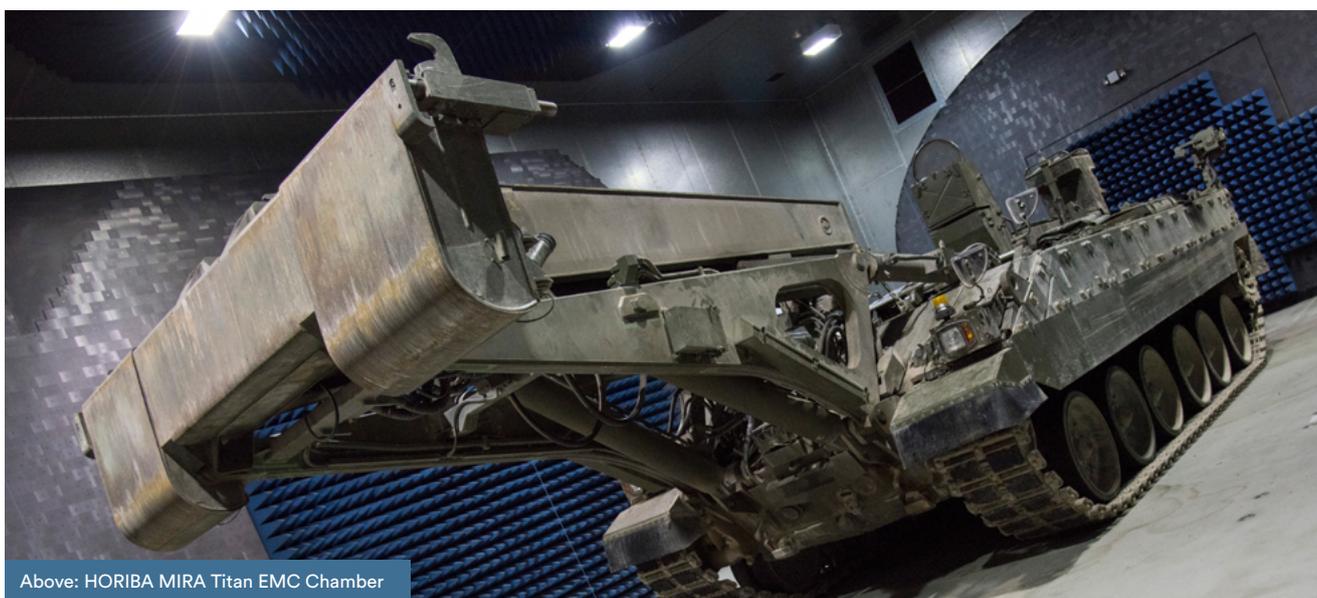
9. Call to action

This blueprint demonstrates the Midlands’ firm commitment to positioning defence as a catalyst for economic growth and national resilience. We are ready to move from ambition to action - working collaboratively with the MOD, wider government, and a broad coalition of local partners to deliver on these priorities. Clear, specific accountability and success measures will be agreed jointly by EMCCA, WMCA, and the Midlands Defence and Security Industry Council as part of the implementation process.

Unlocking SME potential and strengthening supply chains	
10-year priority	Three-year actions
<p>The Midlands will be recognised as the UK’s most agile and resilient defence SME ecosystem - driving innovation, powering exports, and building robust supply chains through strategic partnerships and modernised procurement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host supplier engagement days in partnership with MOD and industry, scaling up “Meet the Buyer” activity through bodies such as the Midlands Aerospace Alliance. • Leverage segmented procurement models to open opportunities for SMEs via networks such as RDSCs and the Defence Offices for Small Business Growth and Export. • Integrate defence into existing supply chain transition programmes and explore a dedicated defence readiness programme, working with primes as anchor companies. • Explore options to help Midlands SMEs meet cyber security standards - such as Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus - by signposting existing regional support and identifying opportunities for future collaboration. • Help align Midlands supply chain opportunities with the Defence Investment Plan by acting on specific opportunities that relate to Midlands capabilities.

Building an inclusive, future-ready defence workforce

10-year priority	Three-year actions
<p>The Midlands will lead the UK in cultivating a future-ready defence workforce - connecting people to opportunity through inclusive pathways, specialist training, and deep industry-academic collaboration, ensuring defence growth benefits all communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drive defence-led regeneration to reconnect mid-career workers with high-value employment, focusing on deprived neighbourhoods and under-represented communities.• Co-develop targeted skills interventions with government, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leveraging opportunities within the Skills Mission Fund to maximise shared investment.• Developing collaborative proposals for future Defence Technical Excellence Colleges.• Creating pathways for workers to pivot between defence and civil sectors.• Align regional skills and careers offers with the national “Destination Defence” campaign, engaging schools, colleges, and cadet forces.• Partner with Midlands universities to strengthen graduate pipelines into the defence industry• Champion inclusive employment practices by encouraging regional stakeholders to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme, including setting measurable targets for signatory growth.



Above: HORIBA MIRA Titan EMC Chamber

Driving innovation and dual-use capability

10-year priority

The Midlands will be a national powerhouse for defence innovation - home to world-class dual-use R&D, thriving university-industry partnerships, and a Midlands innovation hub anchoring the UKDI pipeline.

Three-year actions

- Maximise engagement with UKDI, exploring options for a Midlands-based innovation hub to anchor defence R&D, SME engagement, and dual-use technology development.
- Leverage the High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC) to deliver regional benefits from its MOD MoU, including joint demonstrators and SME access to its facilities.
- Support Midlands universities to deepen collaboration with DSTL through joint research calls, secondments, and innovation fellowships.
- Align regional innovation investment with defence and dual-use priorities, ensuring defence needs inform programme design.
- Integrate defence into high-growth clusters (e.g., aerospace, digital, EV/battery tech), identifying dual-use opportunities and attracting inward investment.

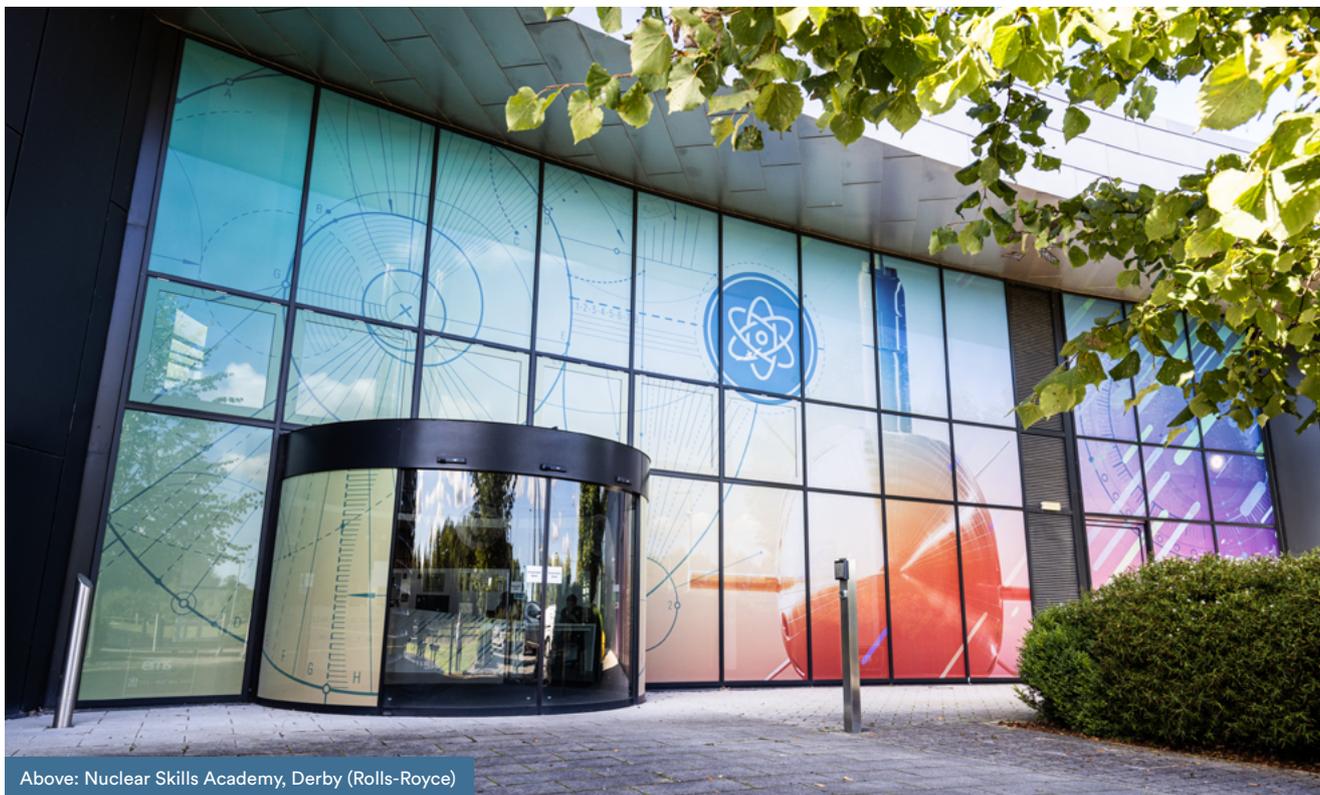


Above: Richard Parker visiting Babcock in Walsall



Mobilising investment for defence growth

10-year priority	Three-year actions
<p>The Midlands will unlock transformational defence investment by securing a Defence Growth Deal, attracting global capital, and embedding defence across high-value industrial zones and strategic infrastructure - while leveraging major events like the Invictus Games to showcase innovation, rehabilitation leadership, and inclusive growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Position the Midlands for a future Defence Growth Deal.• Publish regional defence investment propositions to showcase our offer to global investors, and integrate defence into adjacent regional propositions and programmes.• Leverage international partnerships, inward investment opportunities and events to attract global primes and innovators to the Midlands.• Promote the Midlands as a defence-friendly region, improving perceptions and championing a more practical and supportive access to finance system for the sector.• Align with international defence agreements and explore participation in UK and HORIZON initiatives for joint R&D and exports.• Maximise the legacy of the Invictus Games 2027, by promoting Midlands leadership in defence medicine, rehabilitation innovation, and inclusive veteran support.



Above: Nuclear Skills Academy, Derby (Rolls-Royce)

Establishing governance for impact and delivery

10-year priority	Three-year actions
<p>The Midlands will embed defence and security as a core regional priority - with strong governance, empowered clusters, and a unified industry-led voice influencing national policy and steering delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Grow and operationalise Regional Defence and Security Clusters (RDSCs) in partnership with MOD, industry, and academia - driving innovation, supply chain development, and workforce readiness.● Embed defence priorities into Local Growth Plans and regional investment strategies, ensuring alignment with cluster development programmes.● Work with MOD and wider government to develop the Midlands Defence Belt - a coordinated corridor of capability, innovation, and investment across the region – initiative further.● Work with local MOD sites and estates to plan workforce pipelines, align estate upgrades with regional regeneration priorities, and help local SMEs access defence supply chain opportunities.● Strengthen strategic partnerships with MOD, industry primes, universities, and innovation bodies to coordinate delivery, share intelligence, and maximise regional impact.● Launch the Midlands Defence and Security Industry Council (MDSIC) - an industry-led strategic forum co-chaired by Midlands Mayors - to champion regional priorities, influence national policy, and oversee delivery of this Blueprint.



Above: Astute-class submarine, powered by Rolls-Royce

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CLAIRE WARD
MAYOR OF THE
EAST MIDLANDS



**Mayor of the
West Midlands**

