

SAAB UK
BUILDING A
SAFER WORLD



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COMBINING THE STRENGTHS OF SWEDISH AND BRITISH ENGINEERING, SAAB UK HAS CREATED A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH IN THE DEFENCE SECTOR.

BUILDING A SAFER WORLD

PROJECT MANAGED BY: TREVOR GRETSINGER

The Saab Group was founded in 1937, but the UK branch of the company dates back only to the dawn of the Covid pandemic. It was a tough time to establish a new arm of the company, but since then Saab UK has seen impressive expansion.

“It’s an enterprise that is seeing significant growth. We have doubled our headcount in the last 18 months,” says Andy Fraser, Group Managing Director of Saab UK. “It means that we are really well positioned to take advantage of our Swedish engineering roots, while bringing that together with the best of British engineering.”

KEEPING THE WORLD SAFE

Fraser believes that engineering knowledge is needed now more than ever, as there is rising demand for high tech defence technology that can help keep the world safe. This is why Saab has made a £100 million investment in Saab UK over the last year alone.

“We are growing our own IP here in the UK, making mergers and acquisitions such as our purchase of drone developer BlueBear last year,” Fraser says. “BlueBear in particular offers Saab a significant manufacturing presence that builds on Saab’s long-term growth and expanding presence in the UK.”

It is something that Fraser is clearly passionate about. In his previous career in the British army, Fraser first came across Saab in a training environment. As Group Managing Director of

Saab UK, he has seen the country become a real focus area for the Group as a whole.

But the keystone of its approach is that Britain is not just a market full of potential, but a talent pool that compliments Saab Group’s own.

“There is a professional way to approach engineering. We have tried and tested methods to go through a product life cycle, and that method has matured in both the UK and Sweden,” Fraser explains. “You can follow the steps from bright idea to product maturity, into manufacturing and out to market. That process and methodology are quite international and relatively easy to follow through. But the specific technologies developed in the UK and Sweden are complementary. The different approaches and cultures let us unlock different technologies that marry together well.”

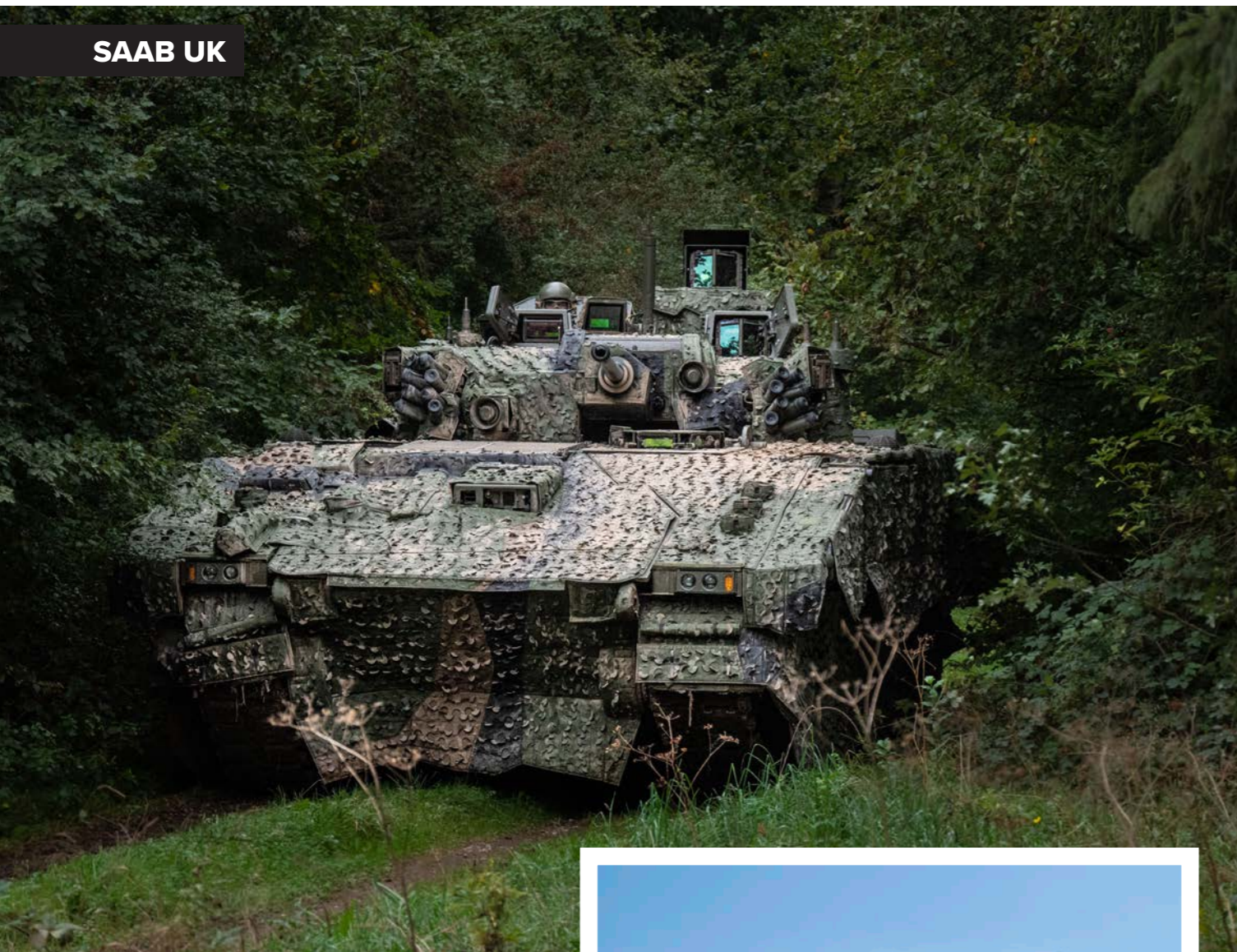
BRITAIN SUPPLIES

That technology is backed up by a robust supply chain and industry network. Saab UK has around 1,000 partners across its supply chain, 99% of which are SMEs, and Fraser tells us he expects that to grow significantly over the coming years. >>

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[Opposite Page]
Andy Fraser,
Group Managing Director,
Saab UK.





For instance, the vehicle that is arguably Saab's signature piece, the Gripen fighter jet, draws 37% of its total supply chain from the UK, a £3 billion endeavour that will support 6,000 jobs over the next ten years.

At the same time, the Next-generation Light Anti-tank Weapon (NLAW) has already proven absolutely crucial in the early stages of repelling the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and 66% of those weapons come from the UK supply chain.

"Saab's products have been a significant part of the support for Ukraine, and that is important to us," Fraser emphasises. "The majority of NLAW's final assembly has been done in the UK in partnership with Thales, at their manufacturing facility in Belfast. When we saw the urgency of the situation, we redoubled our



efforts to increase manufacturing volumes."

Saab UK's technology also includes the Barracuda Mobile Camouflage System (MCS), a multispectral camouflage solution that protects its wearer from visual, infrared and radar detection, which is being supplied through collaboration with the Abbey Group in Liverpool.

A SENSE OF PURPOSE

In all of these projects, across the supply chain and within Saab UK's own recruitment and retention drives, one belief ties those people and projects together.

"One thing I have learned is the power of a sense of purpose," Fraser says. "Keeping people and society safe is fundamental. It speaks volumes to me personally, because I have served in Afghanistan. I have seen what it is like when you do not have the opportunity to feel safe. That underpins everything we do throughout Saab."

To aid in that sense of purpose, Fraser has simplified and narrowed-down Saab UK's purpose to two key goals.

"Firstly, make sure our people love their career. Not just enjoy the job - love their career," Fraser says. "Secondly, to delight our customers. Bringing those two goals together is what I feel we should be doing as business leaders."

It means Saab UK is well positioned to attract that special blend of Swedish and British engineering expertise, particularly as Saab invests 17% of its sales revenue back into research and development. Saab UK have also been developing its new site in Fareham, to be the base of production for its Seaeeye underwater systems and Sensor Systems' Centre of Radar Excellence. The whole

site in Fareham supports 400 jobs at Saab UK, in established and future roles across various business activities. It makes Saab UK an exciting place to work, allowing it to retain people by giving them new and exciting things to work on.

"We have a really high-end workforce with fantastically intelligent people doing incredible things," Fraser says.

That workforce informs what Fraser refers to as "the Triple Helix", the best of government, industry and academia coming together to create the Saab UK Innovation Network. Centred at Imperial Collage's Scale Space in White City, the network seeks to identify and apply for relevant UK research funding opportunities within Saab UK's focus technology areas; Radar Solutions, Electronic Warfare, Underwater Defence and Public Safety. Part of this includes developing UK IP which directly supports Saab UK's growth. It is this Innovation Network that Saab UK seeks to build on with its acquisitions and partnerships

of companies such as BlueBear and Abbey Group.

"We have been supporting the British army for 30 years with training and simulation technology. We have a good heritage, and we are doing exciting things while growing significantly," Fraser reports.

Looking to the future, Fraser adds, "In some ways the future is simple. In some ways, it is complex.

Saab will grow further in the UK. We have work ahead to bring everyone together, creating a sense of firmly embedded identity."

Saab UK is set to continue to invest in the country and its manufacturing and engineering capabilities here.

"We plan to grow and expand along with the demand our customers place in front of us," says Fraser. "The world is a dangerous place right now. We think that will be the case for some time. What drives us is our desire to make the world a safer place by delivering cutting edge technology." ☺





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