

Strategic Imperative: Key Takeaways and Future Horizons from the Defence Energy Conference 2026



A Team Defence Information conference perspective.

The intersection of national security and the global energy transition has moved from a forward-looking discussion to an immediate operational necessity. This shift was the driving force behind the Defence Energy Conference 2026, which took place on 20–21 April 2026.

Led by Ministry of Defence (MoD) and facilitated by Team Defence Information, the event brought together key stakeholders from across the military, industry, academia, and international allies. The overarching objective was clear: review how the armed forces can navigate the evolving energy transition while building a coherent, secure, and resilient infrastructure capable of transitioning rapidly to conflict.

Core Themes: From Strategy to Operational Reality

The conference dialogues systematically traced the path from cross-government policy down to front-line realities, focusing on high-level operational concepts rather than siloed capabilities.

1. Energy Security as a National Strength and Sovereign Capability

The foundational sessions established that energy resilience is inextricably linked to operational readiness and national economic strength.

- **Whole-of-Government Alignment:** Discussions emphasized a coordinated, cross-departmental energy security framework that aligns national resilience policies with specific Defence mandates.
- **The Integrated System:** Participants examined the need for systemic coherence, treating energy as an integrated system that spans fixed estates, industrial partners, deployed assets, and international allies.
- **Alliance Enablement:** The dialogue integrated international perspectives, highlighting that energy security is a cornerstone of interoperability and collective alliance resilience.

2. Strategic Insights from the Front Line

The operational requirements of Land, Sea, and Air environments demand distinct energy characteristics, yet require a unified architecture.

- **Command Signals:** The focus centred on understanding the unique constraints of demand signals across the different services, particularly the challenges of strategic electrification and decarbonisation without degrading capability.
- **Commercial and Analytical Decision-Making:** Dedicated blocks investigated the sheer complexity of energy data, analysing how digital tools and supply-side modelling can help the MoD make more effective, risk-informed choices.

3. Science, Technology, and Targeted Delivery

The technical focus closed with a deep dive into accelerating change through collaborative research programs, specifically exploring alternative funding pathways, commercial distribution frameworks, and grid optimization models to match rapidly escalating power demands.

The Strategic Takeaways: Moving Beyond "Just Enough, Just in Time"

Defence must rapidly shift its focus to energy security, resilience, and readiness for conflict. Our existing infrastructure, logistics networks, and supply chains were built during peacetime and reflect a "just enough, just in time" framework. Influenced by lessons from the conflict in Ukraine—where energy systems have been explicitly weaponized—the conference reinforced that these legacy systems must be urgently updated.

The priority areas emerging from the conference include:

- **Commercial and Policy Reform:** Existing MoD procurement and regulatory frameworks are increasingly viewed as barriers to innovation and private finance. The MoD must actively evolve its commercial policies to share risk with industry, allowing for the deep integration of private capital required to fund large-scale energy projects.
- **Understanding the Future Demand Signal:** Defence must rapidly improve how it models energy consumption across the strategic base and the tactical edge, using advanced digital twins and AI tools to forecast demand during conflict scenarios.
- **Standardisation and Interoperability:** To safeguard our ability to fight alongside NATO and international allies, there must be strict standardisation across future energy vectors, battery technologies, and smart digital management platforms
- **Unlocking the Defence Estate:** Despite a massive geographical footprint, the UK Defence estate currently generates less than 1% of its own energy, leaving it heavily exposed to National Grid constraints and price volatility. The estate must be treated as a strategic asset for localized energy generation and storage.
- **Supply Chain Sovereignty:** The transition to electrification increases reliance on Critical Raw Materials (CRMs) like copper. Defence must adopt circular economy principles and secure its supply chains to avoid dependencies on potential adversaries.

Staying Part of the Community: What's Next?

The conclusion of the conference is not the end of the work, but the launchpad for a sustained campaign. Team Defence Information is committed to keeping this vital ecosystem connected through several upcoming initiatives:

1. Trans-Atlantic Bilateral Workshops

Building on the international perspectives highlighted at the event, we are planning a series of **UK/US bilateral workshops**. These sessions will focus heavily on the energy resilience of United States Visiting Forces (USVF) operating out of UK airbases, exploring multi-vector energy distribution, long-duration storage, and smart "island mode" grids.

2. Allied Support

We are actively looking to support **Canada's Armed Forces** as they navigate their own strategic pivot from traditional fossil fuels to modern operational energy frameworks, ensuring that lessons learned in the UK help accelerate allied readiness.

3. The Long Horizon

Because true energy infrastructure transformation takes time, the next formal **UK Defence Energy Conference** will be scheduled **18 months to 2 years out**. This deliberate timeline will ensure that the next gathering is focused entirely on *progress, delivery, and active programs of work*, rather than just re-stating the challenges.

Get Involved: Join a Snack Panel!

We want to keep the momentum alive in bite-sized, actionable ways. If you or your organization would like to participate in a "**Snack Panel**"—short, sharp virtual discussion session designed to deep-dive into specific technical or commercial energy challenges—please reach out to the Team Defence Information facilitation team to register your interest.

The roadmap is set. Now is the time to transition these insights into sustained capability.

A Special Thank You to Our Sponsors and Host

An event of this scale and strategic importance is only possible with the dedicated backing of our industry partners.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Rolls-Royce for graciously hosting the conference and providing the ideal venue for these vital discussions.

We also want to formally thank our generous sponsors who fuelled both the networking sessions and the collaborative environment across the two days:

- Centrica
- GE Vernova
- Hydrostar UK
- Landmark
- Schneider Electric
- World Fuels Group
- Green Shield Group

Thank you all for your vital contributions to the defence energy community.