

► DIVISION VEHICLE SYSTEMS and WEAPON AND AMMUNITION

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Rheinmetall and RBSL at DSEI: Challenger 3 programme achieves another major milestone

Another major milestone has been reached for the Challenger 3 (CR3) Programme with 120mm smoothbore gun test firings successfully completed.

The first firings with the 120mmL55A1 weapon system in the 120mmL55A1CR3 configuration for the British CR3 Main Battle Tank (MBT) took place in April this year. The new 120mmL55A1CR3 weapon system will provide the British Army with the capability to meet all current and future battlefield challenges.

The first two 120mm smoothbore L55A1 weapons entered production, ahead of schedule in 2021 at Rheinmetall's Unterluesch facility. The weapon is a key component to the CR3 programme, which aims to deliver the most capable tank in NATO. Following production, the smoothbore guns have been tested and validated prior to delivery to Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL) in Telford for integration with the new digital turret.



First CR3 Turret Structure

Last month, in August 2023, the first CR3 citadel for Prototype 1 (P1) arrived in Telford. This is the steel structure that forms the basis of the first CR3 turret.

While it will initially be used in the first trials vehicle - P1 - this citadel will eventually be upgraded to form part of a full service Challenger 3 that will be a capability for the British Army for many years to come. Working with our key partner, Pearson Engineering, this citadel delivery is a significant milestone in the Challenger 3 programme. It follows the initial delivery from Pearson's back in February of the first-off demonstrator turret.

Since steel was first cut on the project at Armstrong Works by former Minister of Defence Procurement, Jeremy Quin MP, project teams from all the involved companies have worked together to explore opportunities and challenges as part of an initial phase to future-proof working methods and detailed manufacturing processes.

Gareth Ayre, RBSL's Head of Physical Architecture & Mobility for Challenger 3 said: "Completing the first turret structure of CR3 is a significant milestone in the delivery of this next generation main battle tank. The manufacturing capability and expertise Pearson Engineering and Responsive Engineering have brought to the programme has enabled the realisation and embodiment of the advanced RBSL turret structure. This is a fantastic achievement from both a manufacture and partnership perspective from everyone involved and a major boost for UK prosperity."

► Key facts

- Rheinmetall and RBSL have reached another milestone in the Challenger 3 upgrade programme
- Successful test firings of the new 120mm L55A1CR3 weapon system
- In August 2023 the first CR3 citadel for Prototype 1 (P1) arrived in Telford.
- Visit us from 12th to 15th September 2023 at Stand H5-110

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Craig Priday, Managing Director at Pearson Engineering added: “Working closely with RBSL and Responsive Engineering, this project has been a true collaborative effort leveraging the strengths of each company. Extensive teamwork during the development and delivery of the demonstrator turret, as well as Prototype 1 and Prototype 2, has allowed us to identify challenges early and to develop our approach at Armstrong Works to collectively deliver an exceptional future capability to the British Army.”

2023 - A year of milestones

2023 has been a significant year for milestones within the Challenger 3 Programme.

The year started with the news that the Critical Design Review (CDR) for CR3 had been approved ahead of schedule and to budget.

The CR3 teams from RBSL, DE&S’ Land Equipment Operating Centre and the British Army worked closely to progress the programme and achieve CDR, which follows the Initial Design Review (IDR) held in March 2022 and is the culmination of an enormous amount of collaborative work.

The team have also conducted successful trials of a cutting-edge new armour system that will protect the tank; a UK sovereign capability based on a DSTL design and manufactured by RBSL.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL)

RBSL is a UK-based joint venture business between Rheinmetall and BAE Systems. RBSL has a long-standing relationship with the British Army having designed and delivered many of the Army’s existing combat vehicles under different business names, including the Challenger 2.

RBSL continues to provide in-service support for British Army vehicle fleets and, in addition to the Challenger 3 programme, is one of the major manufacturers of the Boxer Armoured Vehicle under the UK MOD’s Mechanised Infantry Vehicle programme.

CR3 Programme

In May 2021, Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL), announced it had been awarded an £800m contract to upgrade 148 Challenger 3 (CR3) Main Battle Tanks for the British Army.

The upgraded vehicle will be a network-enabled, digital Main Battle Tank with state-of-the-art lethality, upgraded survivability, offering world-class surveillance and target acquisition capabilities.

Since the announcement, the Telford-based company has been working at pace and in collaboration with the British Army, Defence Equipment & Support and industry partners to deliver the programme.