

## Supplementary Written Evidence from Thales

### **The ownership status of West Wales Airport and risks/implications of this (Q62);**

- West Wales Airport (WWA) in its entirety is owned by private ownership. The Technology Park ('Parc Aberporth') is owned by Welsh Gov and WWA sublease it to Thales and other users.
- The change to the ownership of WWA is not a risk that we see in the near term and implications of a change of ownership would be considered at the time and would depend on any specific sale.

### **How the capability at WWA complements or is distinctive from other drone testing sites around the UK (Q68);**

- Undoubtedly, WWA is a distinctive facility for drone test and evaluation; utilising the local infrastructure and environment ideal for testing and experimenting with Autonomous Systems and training users.
- The available airspace in particular is world-leading, compared to the constraints associated with drone testing at other sites. While other sites in the UK can offer short range options for smaller aircraft, WWA provides the ability to test larger drones and the environment to conduct long range air/land/sea testing of all drone types in complex scenarios.
- The partnership with the local Aberporth MOD range, QinetiQ, West Wales Airport and local suppliers is key to sustainment of this unique capability in Wales.
- With the right support from Welsh and/ or UK Government, the range has the potential to become a centre of excellence for the development, test and evaluation for unmanned systems.

### **Whether the Ukraine conflict has contributed to a shift in MoD thinking on procurement (Q75)**

- The conflict in Ukraine has undoubtedly shifted the MoD's thinking on procurement. This is something that we have seen formally, in the sense that they have updated key policy documents like the Defence Command Paper, and anecdotally in the sense of importance that was there between MoD and industry to deliver at pace for allies in Ukraine and the very open communication between MoD and industry.
- We hope that some of those ways of working will be carried over to become normal practice for the Defence enterprise; the technical capabilities in Wales provide the means by which industry can respond with agility in order to deliver MoD procurement objectives.

12 January 2024