

Beretta Defence Technologies UK Backs Project Grayburn with Rifle Proposal and British Manufacturing Plan

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Britain's defence firm Beretta Defence Technologies UK (BDT UK) has submitted its proposal for Project Grayburn, an ambitious Ministry of Defence (MoD) initiative to replace the SA80 (Small Arms for the 1980s) assault rifle, with a strong emphasis on UK-based manufacturing and long-term industry revitalisation.

BDT UK, part of the Beretta Holding Group, has proposed its New Assault Rifle Platform (NARP) as well as a Finnish-designed Sako variant for the British Army's forthcoming procurement under Project Grayburn. Jack Cadman, military channel manager for BDT UK, confirmed that the company is working closely with the MoD to ensure its platforms are considered during the early stages of the programme.

The NARP is a short-stroke gas piston-operated weapon, featuring upper and lower receivers with the recoil spring positioned in the upper receiver. This allows for a side-folding stock and is adaptable in both 5.56 mm and .300 Blackout calibres. Designed with operational durability in mind, the rifle is intended to perform reliably in a wide range of battlefield conditions. In addition, BDT UK plans to offer the Sako M23 rifle as a potential alternative.

A key feature of the proposal is the establishment of a UK-based production facility. BDT UK intends to transform its existing Skydock test site in Lincolnshire into a 'Small Arms Hub'. This would include a 210-metre indoor ballistic range and be developed into a manufacturing plant capable of producing up to 170,000 rifles by 2042, depending on contract awards.

Project Grayburn remains in its concept phase, with an assessment period expected to begin in 2026. Full procurement is likely to follow in late 2026 or early 2027. The programme is designed to phase out the ageing SA80 platform, currently in its L85A3 configuration, by the early 2030s, with an estimated 150,000 new rifles to be acquired.

The MoD has stated that the project will evaluate performance, interoperability, and system complexity. It aligns with both the UK's

Strategic Defence Review and the government's Land Industrial Strategy, which aims to strengthen sovereign defence manufacturing capability.

BDT UK is drawing on its experience supplying the M9 pistol to the US military, offering a full model for local production that includes weapon assembly, optics integration, and technology transfer. Cadman emphasised that the project would not only deliver a cutting-edge weapons system but also help secure long-term British defence jobs and industrial expertise.