

News story: Shipbuilding firms chosen for Fleet Solid Support competition

A syndicate of British firms, along with four international shipbuilding companies, have been selected to compete for the Fleet Solid Support ships contract, Defence Minister Stuart Andrew has announced.

The crucial vessels, which will deliver ammunition, food and supplies to UK forces across the globe, will work alongside the Royal Navy's fleet of warships and will be an important part of the UK Maritime Task Group.

The British consortium is made up of leading manufacturing and engineering companies Babcock, BAE Systems, Cammell Laird and Rolls-Royce.

They join Italian firm Fincantieri, Spanish company Navantia, Japan Marine United Corporation, and Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering of South Korea as the five successful firms who have been invited to submit a tender for the competition.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

The widespread interest in this competition shows that our Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary remain among the most prestigious in the world.

These support ships will be vital for supporting our formidable Queen Elizabeth Class carriers and will ensure our warships can deploy in a range of challenging environments and across huge distances, wherever they are in the world.

The five companies, which were selected from eight interested firms, will now develop bids before a final decision is made regarding the winning bidder in 2020.

The Fleet Solid Support ships, up to three of which will be procured through international competition as they are not warships, will be fitted with specialist and classified equipment at a British shipyard before entering service with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary from 2026.

Shipyards across the United Kingdom will be able to bid for this work in 2022.

As part of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the vessels will be civilian-manned and carry self-defence weapons only.

News story: Defence Secretary announces new additions to Innovation Panel



The report concluded that an innovation ecosystem has emerged in Defence over the last year and is broadly working well. It has advised the Department on several ways it can continue to develop its approach to become more innovative.

In its response, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) outlined their commitment to improve the delivery of innovation and how it will meet the challenges. This includes recruiting a new Director of Defence Innovation, and improving the way data collection, sharing and analysis is delivered within the Department.

A new team of innovation experts have joined the dedicated Panel helping the MOD gain a military advantage through imagination, ingenuity and entrepreneurship.

The four new Panel members are:

- Chair of the Henry Royce Institute, Baroness Brown of Cambridge: Julia King
- CEO of software company, ARM Holdings: Simon Segars
- Co-founder of What If: Dave Allan
- Associate Dean for Innovation at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology: Professor Fiona Murray

They join Major Tim Peake, the first British astronaut at the European Space Agency; former Chief Executive of Innovate UK: Ruth McKernan; general partner at Google Ventures: Tom Hulme; and Chief Executive of BMT Group: Sarah Kenny.

Please follow the link for the [Defence Innovation Advisory Panel Report 2018](#)

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News story: Small businesses behind Defence's biggest projects recognised

Small companies from every part of the UK have played a pivotal role in recent Defence projects, including building the UK's game-changing F-35 fighter jets and delivering the Royal Navy's largest ever warships, the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Small businesses across the UK are a vital cog in the Defence supply chain, from fitting warship galleys in Newcastle to building circuit boards in the South West. They bring innovation, unique expertise and a competitive edge to Defence industry.

And with startups run by former service personnel and manufacturers making the most of our veterans' unique knowledge, our nation's economy as a whole is feeling the benefit of our Armed Forces' expertise and training.

I would like to thank every small business in the country who has invested hundreds of hours of their time, their considerable skills and expertise in support of our Armed Forces.

Taking place on the first Saturday of December, Small Business Saturday celebrates the huge contribution that small businesses make to the British economy and their local communities.

The 107 employees of Exception PCB, from Gloucestershire, manufactured the circuit boards that control many of the F-35's core capabilities, including its engines, lighting, fuel and navigation systems.

Despite the huge scale of the 65,000-tonne Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers, even some of Britain's smallest businesses have played a key role in their construction. Caterform, a family-owned business with fewer than 12 employees, worked on the galleys and server areas of the carriers that will feed a crew of 700. This Tyneside company has fitted kitchen equipment on the galleys of Royal Navy ships for over 30 years.

And over 100 British small businesses helped build the new F-35 fighter jets, who this September had their historic first landing on the deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth. Manchester-based EDM Ltd provide world-leading training simulators to help the Royal Air Force train its personnel to load weapons and fit ejection seats to its latest fighter, without ever going near a real aircraft.

The 107 employees of Exception PCB, from Gloucestershire, manufactured the circuit boards that control many of the F-35's core capabilities, including its engines, lighting, fuel and navigation systems. Overall, the F-35 programme is expected to boost the UK economy by around £35 billion and create around 25,000 British jobs.

The 90 staff of A&G Precision designed machine components for the fuselage, horizontal and vertical tails of the F-35.

Last year the Ministry of Defence invested over £2.5 billion into small and medium businesses as part of its commitment to make it easier for them to win contracts. In addition, hundreds of small businesses have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, pledging their support for the military community.

The MOD has also launched a range of initiatives, including a new Defence Supplier portal which brings together useful information and opportunities for suppliers in one place; a dedicated Twitter feed to highlight new opportunities for SMEs, @defenceproc; and new, short-form contracts for less-complex procurements.

Press release: G7 Foreign Ministers' statement on recent events near Kerch Strait

The Foreign Ministers of the G7 countries issued a statement on Russia's actions against Ukraine in the Kerch Strait

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We, the G7 foreign ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the High Representative of the European Union, express our utmost concern about Russia's actions against Ukraine in the Kerch Strait and surrounding waters, which have dangerously raised tensions. There is no justification for Russia's use of military force against Ukrainian ships and naval personnel.

We urge restraint, due respect for international law, and the prevention of any further escalation. We call on Russia to release the detained crew and vessels and refrain from impeding lawful passage through the Kerch Strait.

We, the G7, once again reiterate that "we do not, and will never, recognize Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula, and we reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity."