

# Press release: Dstl scientists take to the high seas on HMS Queen Elizabeth

Dstl has been involved in the development of HMS Queen Elizabeth for the past 20 years, starting with the original study to replace the Invincible light carrier fleet. Dstl helped to define the size and shape of the ship and a specialist team investigated ship-air integration, which supported the design of the flight deck and ski-jump used to launch the F-35B Lightning II fighter jets.

Currently on-board is Dstl operational analyst Tom, who will be joined later in September by Hannah, both of whom will provide vital analysis to the battle group and commanders during the voyage. It will be HMS Queen Elizabeth's maiden voyage across the Atlantic as she prepares to embark her first F-35B Lightning II fighter jets. She is one of two new aircraft carriers built for the Royal Navy with the second, HMS Prince of Wales, nearing the end of construction in Rosyth.

The aim of the flight trials is to use specially equipped test aircraft and sensors around the ship to work out the operating parameters of the aircraft and the carrier itself in a range of conditions. The carrier has already conducted similar trials for helicopters.

During the exercise, Dstl scientists will focus on operational analysis, gathering data that will be used to inform future operational activity.

Tom said:

This is a fantastic opportunity, not only to be part of Dstl's continued involvement with the carrier, but to join more than 1,000 military personnel on-board. It's a huge craft and quite daunting – and also the first time I've deployed to sea, let alone on the Queen Elizabeth – but I'm very much looking forward to the tasks ahead and hopefully witness the F-35 jets on-board and in action off the flight deck for the first time.

In addition to providing analytic support to the carrier strike group and commanders, analysis will include looking at the way manpower use can be improved, from how efficiently the vessel can be cleaned to the sortie rates the fighter aircraft can carry out.

Tom added:

Analysis at this level has never been done before, so we will be learning on task; helping to adapt and shape the way the ship will run come its first operational deployment in 2021.

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## **Press release: 10th Meeting of Attorneys General places crime cooperation as international priority**

The Attorneys General of the UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand met from 27 to 30 August to share their experiences in dealing with complex and cross-border legal issues.

Attorney General, the Rt Hon Geoffrey Cox QC MP, represented the UK at the annual Attorneys General meeting, held this year in Queensland, Australia. Issues discussed included the investigation and prosecution of international criminals including terrorism offenders, trial processes, family law and family violence, and the over-representation of ethnic minorities in the criminal justice system.

One of the outcomes of this meeting was a commitment to share experiences on how evidence can be obtained and utilised more effectively in investigations and subsequent prosecutions for terrorists, including foreign fighters. The Attorneys General agreed that their countries faced a growing threat from international terrorism but also that there was already robust international crime cooperation between each of the five countries represented. The Attorneys General also tasked a working group to carry out a study into breaking the cycle of harm, victimisation, and offending for indigenous people and ethnic minorities. It was agreed that the next annual meeting will be held in London in 2019.

As part of the conference, Attorney General Geoffrey Cox took part in one-to-one meetings with his counterparts.

The Attorneys General also joined their respective Interior Ministers and Immigration Ministers in a joint session, known as the Five Country Ministerial meeting, to discuss wider governmental issues including countering foreign interference and espionage, encryption, criminal information sharing, and illicit finance activities. During these discussions it was agreed that the five countries condemn foreign interference activities and will work collectively to ensure that their sovereignties, values, and interests are upheld in the face of this threat. The UK Attorney General was joined at the Five Country Ministerial meeting by the UK Home Secretary, Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP.

Commenting on the meetings, Attorney General Geoffrey Cox said:

This year's meeting gave us the vital time needed to evaluate the escalating threats associated with terrorism and how we tackle common domestic issues like the over-representation of ethnic minorities in our justice systems.

I thank colleagues in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA for their cooperation and insight into the key issues we all face and look forward to welcoming them to London for next year's meeting.

## Notes

This year's meeting of Attorneys General was the 10th to take place since the meeting was established. The first meeting took place in London in 2009.

The Communique, which sets out the issues discussed and actions resulting from the meeting, can be found [here](#)

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## [News story: Refurbished homes for sailors at HMNB Clyde](#)

The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) led the £1.5 million refurbishment at Bannachra Drive in Helensburgh, which will help improve the lives of Royal Navy families already living in the area, and of some of the hundreds of families expected to move to the vicinity when the base becomes the Submarine Centre of Specialisation.

From 2020 HM Naval Base Clyde will host all of the Royal Navy's hunter killer submarines and will be the future home of the Dreadnought class of nuclear deterrent submarines. The MOD is investing hundreds of millions of pounds in developing HMNB Clyde, with the construction phases of the work expected to support a further 1,000 contractor jobs.

The development of the site will see the number employed rise from the current figure of 6,800 to an eventual population of 8,500, with up to 1,400 Royal Navy submariners moving to the area from Plymouth. In the future all submariners will expect to serve their entire career at HM Naval Base Clyde, ensuring greater harmony and stability for them and their families. The refurbishment of these 34 family homes also contributes to the joint Royal Navy and Argyll and Bute Council strategy to align the development of the naval base with local needs such as planning and transport.

The extensive upgrade work at Bannachra, which was carried out by Amey and contractor Bells Ltd, included the fitting of new roofs, windows and doors, as well as new boilers, external wall insulation and rendering of the

buildings. Work was also undertaken to replace fencing and gates and rain water goods, with chimneys on the properties also removed and garage roofs replaced.

Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell was there to witness the completion of the refurbishment work on August 28, joined by Air Commodore Wendy Rothery, DIO's Head of Accommodation, and Captain Craig Mearns, HMNB Clyde's Captain of the Base.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

The work of the HM Naval Base Clyde team demonstrates clearly how Scotland benefits from the UK's armed forces, and how our military contributes to the safety and prosperity of Scotland. HM Naval Base Clyde makes a huge contribution to the local area, providing skilled jobs, supporting the local economy and contributing to regeneration. This project, which will improve service families' accommodation, is a great example of that strong partnership with the local community in action.

Commenting on the work, Air Commodore Rothery said:

The refurbishment of these houses is a prime example of how DIO provides vital support to the Armed Forces. This upgrade work will make a real difference to the quality of life of our Royal Navy personnel and their families. We are grateful to all the residents for their patience with the inevitable disruption caused by the work, and we hope they are very happy with the results.

In February 2017 the Naval Base, UK government and local authority Argyll and Bute signed a unique agreement committing the parties to work together to ensure that investment in the military site benefited the growth and regeneration of the wider community. The Strategic Defence Delivery Framework agreement, as it is known, is aimed at delivering new housing and improved infrastructure, ensuring that both the Service community and people living in Argyll and Bute benefit directly from hosting the base.

Captain Craig Mearns, HMNB Clyde's Captain of the Base, said:

The Naval Base Command is delighted to see completion of this Service Family Accommodation refurbishment project.

The expansion of activity at Clyde and growth of our Service population over the next few years means that we need to make best use of all available accommodation. It is important that what we have to offer is of a high standard, not only because that is what our people deserve, but also because we aim to encourage an increasing number of Service families to relocate to this area. The

offer of good housing, coupled with the excellent amenities and quality of life on offer here, are significant attractions for those considering such a move.

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## **Press release: Highways England repairs project on Oldbury Viaduct enters next phase**

Repair teams on the M5 Oldbury Viaduct scheme are gearing up for the next phase of the mammoth scheme with traffic set to switch to the northbound carriageway next month.

Concrete repairs and waterproofing on the southbound carriageway are now nearing completion along a two-mile section of the viaduct.

From Monday 3 September, the entire operation, between junctions 1 and 2, transfers from the south to the northbound carriageway.

For work to begin on the northbound carriageway, traffic will move over onto the completed southbound carriageway. The switching process will last around a week and to minimise disruption will take place gradually overnight to ensure traffic flows during the day.

Highways England Head of Service Delivery, Andrew Butterfield, said:

We're fast approaching completion of work on the southbound carriageway.

I appreciate it's not been straightforward getting here. We were only able to fully assess the condition of the southbound carriageway once the work had started and found around 6,000 individual repairs were needed, which is 4,500 more than anticipated. To add to the challenges, we had one of the harshest winters, followed by warmest summers in years.

As a result, work on this section has taken longer than expected, but we're committing every resource available to get this work done as safely and quickly as possible. "We understand the level of disruption this project involves, and we'd like to thank motorists, businesses and residents for their patience.

At more than £100 million, M5 Oldbury is believed to be the largest concrete repair project, by value, ever carried out in Britain. At the same time, it

is also thought to be the largest scaffolding project in Europe, with over 400 hundred miles of scaffolding erected, enough scaffold boards to cover seven football pitches and enough scaffold staircases to reach the top of Ben Nevis and Snowdon.

Much of the work takes place underneath the viaduct and so the workforce, averaging around 500 people, cannot always be seen by the travelling public.

To keep the motorway open during the work, a contraflow system is currently in place with traffic using the carriageway with two lanes operating in each direction, along with a 30mph speed limit.

Slip roads at junctions 1 and 2 will remain open once the switch takes place to ease effects on the local network. When the main concrete repairs are completed, the M5 will return to three narrow lanes in each direction so that work, including central reservation upgrades, can take place. For more information about the work at Oldbury viaduct visit <https://www.highwaysengland.co.uk/oldburyviaduct>.

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.