

Press release: Business contribution to Britain's biggest warships recognised

HMS Queen Elizabeth, the nation's future flagship and the first of Britain's two new 65,000 tonne aircraft carriers, will be formally commissioned into the Royal Navy by Her Majesty the Queen next week (07/12).

But the construction of the 280 metre-long ship would never have been possible without the essential work undertaken by small and medium sized enterprises (SME) from around Britain.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

On behalf of Defence, the government and the whole of the United Kingdom, I would like to thank the hundreds of businesses around the country for the millions of hours they've spent equipping our ships in what has been an immense nationwide enterprise.

Their Herculean efforts showcase our great British talent and saw HMS Queen Elizabeth complete her 2017 sea trials with flying colours as she prepares to project our interests right across the world.

Over 700 British SME's have supported the build of the aircraft carriers in what has been a truly national endeavour. The programme has brought together the best of British industry, with construction involving more than 10,000 people including more than 800 apprentices.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin has recognised the vital contribution that businesses from across the UK have made to the construction of the Royal Navy's largest ever ships.

Chief of Materiel Ships at the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation, Sir Simon Bollom said:

I am incredibly proud of how DE&S and our colleagues across Defence have worked in collaboration with businesses across the UK to deliver a programme of such global significance.

The success of the Queen Elizabeth class is a testament to the thousands of people who have worked on the programme and the vital skills they bring. I look forward to continuing our important relationship with industry to bring the second ship, HMS Prince of Wales, into service.

In 2015/2016 the Ministry of Defence invested over £18bn with UK industry, supporting more than 120,000 full-time jobs, and benefiting local economies.

Last year saw the MOD's direct spend with SME's increase by over 10% across the country as it continues to make it easier for them to win defence business.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin has launched initiatives such as a new Supplier Portal, which brings together a range of useful information for new and prospective suppliers in one place for the first time, a dedicated Twitter account to flag opportunities to SMEs and simplified contracts for lower-value, less complex procurements.

Soon after the commissioning ceremony on Thursday 7th December, work will continue apace to ready Britain's most advanced military vessel ever for the vital role it will play in projecting Britain's influence around the world.

Next year the new F-35B Lightning II stealth jets, the most advanced warplane in the world, will start flight trials from the ship, and HMS Queen Elizabeth is on track to be fully deployable anywhere in the world by 2021.

Both of the UK's aircraft carriers are being delivered by the Aircraft Carrier Alliance, a unique partnering relationship between industry and the UK Ministry of Defence.

Press release: UK encouraged to 'shop small' this Small Business Saturday

- government ministers out in force to support their local independent businesses this Small Business Saturday (2 December)
- the UK is home to a record 5.7 million small businesses

Government ministers are visiting independent businesses across the UK today in celebration of Small Business Saturday.

The annual campaign, now in its fifth year, champions and supports the UK's small businesses. Last Small Business Saturday, £717 million was spent in small businesses on the day.

Small Business Minister, Margot James said:

This government is completely behind the UK's 5.7 million small businesses – they are there, day in and day out, at the heart of our local communities.

They are the backbone of our economy, so I encourage everyone to

think big by shopping small this Small Business Saturday.

At the start of 2017 there were a record 5.7 million small businesses in the UK – an increase of more than 1.2 million since the start of 2010. The [latest business population estimates](#) show that these businesses are responsible for 48% of private sector employment and contribute £1.4 trillion in turnover.

Since 2010, government support for smaller businesses includes:

- British Business Bank programmes supporting £3.4 billion of finance to over 59,000 smaller businesses
- over 50,000 Start-Up Loans worth more than £348 million
- increasing the amount central government spends with small business – central government contracts above £10,000 are openly advertised on the government's procurement website, [Contracts Finder](#)
- a network of 38 local growth hubs which make it easier for start-ups and existing businesses to access the support they need
- appointing a Small Business Commissioner to champion the interests of small business and help drive a culture change in payment practises

Additional support in the Budget included a 10-year action plan to unlock £20 billion of investment in innovative firms, a £2.3 billion package to reduce business rates bills and further freezes to fuel duty worth £850 million a year.

For more information about government support available to small businesses, please [contact the business helplines](#).

[Press release: UK Government Ministers back Welsh SMEs on Small Business Saturday](#)

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns and UK Government Minister Guto Bebb will visit independent businesses in their constituencies this weekend, in celebration of the annual Small Business Saturday campaign on 2 December.

International Trade Secretary Liam Fox will also visit small businesses in Newport who are making their mark on the local economy.

Now in its fifth year, the campaign encourages consumers to shop in small, local businesses. Last year, consumers spent £717m in small businesses on the Saturday – a 15% increase on 2015.

The UK Government recently unveiled its Industrial Strategy, which includes

driving over £20bn of investment in innovative and high potential businesses, including establishing a new £2.5bn Investment Fund incubated in the British Business Bank.

In Wales, the British Business Bank has already guaranteed over 1,251 loans to support small businesses since its inception in 2014, with a cumulative value of £134.8 million. The Start-up Loans Company has also provided 2,086 loans to businesses in Wales, worth in excess of £17.1 million.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

Small Business Saturday is an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the hard work that business owners put in to make their firms a success.

SMEs represent a key part of the Welsh economy and are a crucial support network to our communities. I'm delighted to support my local high street businesses on Small Business Saturday and throughout the year.

The UK Government is determined to make sure Welsh businesses have the tools and support they need to be successful. The Industrial Strategy builds on conversations we have had with businesses and employees right across Wales, facilitating major investments in infrastructure and research and creating growth corridors to foster greater cross-border working.

This is a strategy which plays to our economic strengths and addresses some of the challenges Wales is facing, with the aim of driving productivity and generating prosperity across the country.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, said:

Small businesses are the backbone of the UK economy, and Small Business Saturday provides the perfect opportunity to emphasise how they can grow through exporting.

Through websites like great.gov.uk, and now with the launch of our How to Sell Overseas Guide, my department is committed to helping businesses across Newport and the whole of Wales make the most of global demand for British goods and services, and take advantage of growing markets around the world.

UK Government Minister Guto Bebb said:

I look forward to supporting the business owners and entrepreneurs who provide so much to our communities this weekend. From the corner shops that have all life's essential items, to the

innovators who come up with inventive ways to change the world, we have so much to thank small businesses for.

The UK Government recognises the need to support these businesses to ensure economic growth and prosperity, and through the Industrial Strategy we are delivering that support.

I encourage small businesses across Wales to take advantage of the financial backing and informative advice available to them to unleash their potential.

For more information about government support available to small businesses, please visit [finance and support for your business](#).

For more information on the Small Business Saturday campaign visit smallbusinessaturdayuk.com or follow the conversation on social media via #SmallBizSatUK.

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[News story: X Factor charity song 2017: Chancellor to donate VAT to children's charities](#)

The Chancellor announced today that VAT collected on sales for the X Factor winner's charity song will be donated to children's charities.

VAT collected on sales of the X Factor winner's charity song will be donated to children's charities, Together for Short Lives and Shooting Star Chase, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, announced today. Both charities, which provide vital support to children with life-limiting illnesses and their families, will benefit from the donation as the government waives VAT on the X Factor charity song for the seventh year running. Philip Hammond, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said:

I'm delighted to be able to support Together for Short Lives and Shooting Star Chase by donating the VAT collected on all sales of this year's X Factor song. These amazing organisations do such valuable work helping children with life-threatening conditions and supporting their families to cope in extremely challenging circumstances. Every song bought will help to fund their vital work.

The government has previously waived the VAT on other charity singles, such as the 2016 Jo Cox Foundation single, 2015 Save the Children single, the 2011's Military Wives Choir single, and the 2010 Haiti earthquake appeal single.

Press release: Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council: 28 and 29 November 2017

Minister of State for the Overseas Territories Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon joined leaders and representatives of the Overseas Territories this week for talks on hurricane recovery, Brexit, climate change, and tax transparency.

The annual Joint Ministerial Council, held between 28 and 29 November 2017 in London, was also attended by Ministers from across government, including the Department for Exiting the EU, the Department for International Development, Her Majesty's Treasury, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Department of Health and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The talks began with a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, Theresa May, at Downing Street where she updated leaders on the progress of discussions with the European Union and discussed progress on reforming financial services in the Overseas Territories.

The first day of the meetings focused on hurricane relief and recovery and wider UK programme support for the Overseas Territories, including a new £70 million package of recovery and reconstruction support for those islands hit by devastating hurricanes in September. This package sits alongside up to £300 million of UK loan guarantees for territories that need support to access finance.

Caribbean Hurricanes: Building Back Better

The second day of discussions covered a range of issues, including tax transparency and beneficial ownership; preparations for the 2018 Commonwealth Summit; child safeguarding; and climate change.

Minister for the Overseas Territories Lord Ahmad said:

It was wonderful to welcome the leaders of the Overseas Territories once again. The UK is clear that ongoing, close cooperation with the Overseas Territories is in our mutual interest.

We continue to be close partners on vital issues such as climate change and marine protection, and the UK is working closely with the governments of the Overseas Territories to deliver real change on health, corruption and child safeguarding.

The Prime Minister also announced new support for the Territories worst affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, with £70 million of grants and up to £300 million of loan guarantees to make sure essential recovery needs can be met.

Minister for Exiting the European Union Robin Walker led discussions on the progress of exit negotiations and the future Overseas Territories relationship with the EU.

Minister for Exiting the European Union Robin Walker said:

It was a pleasure to again meet with the leaders of the Overseas Territories and to continue our close engagement on shared priorities as we exit the EU.

The UK is responsible for representing the Overseas Territories' priorities in exit negotiations and a clear objective of those negotiations is to achieve a deal that works for all parts of the UK family. Leaders and representatives from the following Overseas Territories attended the [two-day conference]<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-territories-joint-ministerial-council-2017-communique>) in London:

- Anguilla
- Ascension
- Bermuda
- British Virgin Islands
- Cayman Islands
- Falkland Islands
- Gibraltar
- Montserrat
- Pitcairn
- St. Helena
- The Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia
- Tristan da Cunha
- Turks & Caicos Islands

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