

[Proposed closure of Marks and Spencer in Wokingham](#)

I have been notified of a plan for the possible closure the Wokingham store, following consultation with staff who will be offered jobs in neighbouring stores.

I have written back to Marks and Spencer asking why they think they need to close the store, and why they are pessimistic about its future turnover and profitability. I asked if they have found the best mix between food, household and textile products. They need to examine their merchandising and marketing strategy for what should be a successful and profitable store. They also need to take into account the growth of Wokingham and the surrounding area as new housing goes in.

I will let you know what response I receive.

[SNP council election manifesto: what you need to know](#)

Today Nicola Sturgeon launched the SNP's manifesto for the 4 May council elections in Edinburgh. [Read the manifesto in full here.](#)

[Brexit can still be overturned – this is your chance](#)

The President of the European Parliament has said Britain would be welcomed back with open arms if voters changed their minds about Brexit on 8 June.

This directly contradicts Theresa May's claim that 'there is no turning back' after Article 50.

Liberal Democrat Leader Tim Farron said: "This shows it's not too late to prevent a divisive, hard Brexit.

"On 8th June, together we can change the direction of this country.

“The Liberal Democrats will be the real voice of opposition to this Conservative Brexit government.”

[News story: Scottish shipyards begin building Royal Navy's latest patrol ship](#)

Tony Douglas, Chief Executive Officer for Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), the UK's Defence procurement organisation, pressed the button to cut the first sheet of steel for the HMS Spey at BAE Systems' Govan shipyard on the Clyde today.

Like her four sister ships HMS Forth, HMS Medway, HMS Trent and HMS Tamar, which are all either under construction or preparing for sea trials, HMS Spey will be built at Govan before she is transferred to the Scotstoun yard, where she will be fitted out for operations.

Work to build HMS Spey and the rest of the OPV fleet is sustaining 800 jobs and the vital skills needed to build the fleet of next-generation Type 26 Frigates, which will begin construction at Govan in the summer.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin, said:

The start of work on HMS Spey, the fifth Offshore Patrol Vessel, is another milestone in a significant programme of work which is sustaining hundreds of jobs in Scotland and the vital shipbuilding skills needed to build the Royal Navy's new Type 26 Frigates.

The on-going successful delivery of these ships is a key element of the Government's ten-year, £178 billion equipment plan to provide the UK's armed forces with the kit they deserve.

HMS Spey, which will be 90 metres long and displace around 2,000 tonnes, is one of two ships being built under a £287 million agreement signed between the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and BAE Systems in December 2016. She is due to be delivered to the Royal Navy in 2019 and enter service by 2021.

She is expected to carry a 30mm cannon and a flight deck capable of receiving a Merlin helicopter, in support of counter-terrorism, anti-piracy, anti-smuggling and maritime defence operations.

DE&S CEO Tony Douglas said:

The team at Defence Equipment and Support has driven the successful delivery of the OPV programme; today's steel cut is a proud moment not only for us, but for the Royal Navy and our industry partners too.

I am looking forward to continuing this long-standing and close relationship when we begin manufacturing for the Type 26 fleet later in the summer.

Batch 2 Offshore Patrol Vessels have a maximum speed of 24 knots and can sail 5,500 nautical miles before having to resupply.

Probate fees

I lobbied the government against the proposed increase in probate fees. I was pleased to learn yesterday that they are not proceeding with this increase in the present Parliament. I hope they do not reappear in the Manifesto.