

Defence Secretary speech at the Type 31 steel cut ceremony

Thank you all for inviting me here today, I'm really pleased and honoured to be here today. To be precise, I'm not actually going to be cutting the steel, I'm going to press the button to cut the steel on HMS Venturer – which will be the first of our Type 31s

One of five such vessels that form the aptly named "Inspiration" class, HMS Venturer will be state-of-the-art – armed with Sea Ceptor missiles and a 4D radar system.

It will be agile – ranging some 10,000 miles and able to do everything from detecting submarines and intercepting illegal activity to gathering intelligence and providing humanitarian support.

And it will be flexible – adapting to the ever-evolving threats of tomorrow.

But today we're not just marking a milestone in the life of a single ship.

Today is actually about a glimpse of the future of our fleet.

By 2028 HMS Venturer will be joined by HMS Active, HMS Formidable HMS Bulldog and HMS Campbeltown.

Together these frigates will form the fulcrum of a formidable future force made up of: destroyers, new autonomous Mine-Hunting Capability, new Fleet Solid Support Ships, multi-role ocean surveillance and Bay Class Support Ships, and the next generation nuclear submarines and our two magnificent carriers.

In an age of systemic competition, this future fleet will be more persistent, more pro-active and more present overseas as well as a dependable partner in the defence of our global common values.

Today is also about showing how Defence is levelling-up across our nation.

With five vessels to be built by Babcock, the construction of the fleet will directly support 1,250 highly skilled jobs here in Scotland.

It will deliver for the whole of our United Kingdom – sustaining a further 1,250 jobs within the wider UK supply chain.

And by creating 150 new technical apprenticeships and constructing cutting-edge facilities – such as the great Assembly Hall I'll be formally opening in a minute – this programme will generate the talent that keeps our shipbuilding engine ticking over for decades

Finally, today is about sparking a revival of our nation's great shipbuilding traditions. Scottish shipyards have a proud industrial heritage, if not the

proudest in global shipbuilding. In recent years, through assembling mighty vessels like HMS Queen Elizabeth, they've burnished their reputation still more. But with its unique modular design supporting different configurations, this vessel will ensure the made-in-Scotland stamp is sought by allied navies right across the world.

In fact, T31's innovative design – known as Arrowhead 140 – has already attracted international plaudits with an export contract signed with the Secretary of State for Defence of Indonesia at DSEI only last week – an export before we've even finished our ship.

In other words, the first warship competition for over a decade is already delivering. Coupled with our competition to build a new National Flagship as well as our forthcoming refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy, we are sending a powerful signal of our ambition to be a nation of shipping exporters – and shipbuilding exporters as well.

So today is a great day not just for Babcock's designers, builders and apprentices. It is a great day for the Royal Navy. And it is a great day for Global Britain.

Seven ships have borne the name HMS Venturer including a 14-gun cutter, a 10-gun schooner and a motor minesweeper. Perhaps the most famous Venturer of them all was a V-class submarine that, during World War 2, became the only submarine in history to sink another while both were submerged.

Today's warship has a very different form and function. But, come 2023 when HMS Venturer slips its bonds and enters the water, I have no doubt it will emulate the trailblazing successes of its forebears and write its own glorious chapter in our nation's famous maritime history.