

News story: Royal Fleet Auxiliary's new tanker arrives in UK for customisation work sustaining 300 jobs

The 39,000-tonne tanker, which can carry up to 19,000 cubic metres of fuel and 1,300 cubic metres of fresh water, will join the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, a civilian-manned fleet which provides support for warships, helping the Royal Navy to maintain its operations 24/7, 365 days a year, around the world.

Tidespring is the first of a fleet of four Tide Class tankers which will all be taken through customisation in Falmouth. She will now undergo an intense programme of work at the A&P shipyard, and is expected to enter service before the end of the year. The new Tide Class tankers will provide key support to the Queen Elizabeth Class carriers when they come into service, alongside the wider fleet.

The arrival is a significant milestone in the 'Year of the Navy' which will also see the debut in Portsmouth of the first of the Queen Elizabeth-Class aircraft carriers, the start of construction for the fleet of new Type 26 Frigates and the opening of the first permanent Royal Navy base east of Suez in more than half a century.

The first of the newest support ships for the Royal Navy, RFA Tidespring.

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin said:

RFA Tidespring's UK arrival is a key milestone in 2017, the Year of the Royal Navy, which will also see the MOD develop world-class ships and submarines in support of Britain's role as a leading naval power.

Backed by a rising Defence budget, the delivery of the Tide Class tankers is a crucial element of the Government's £178 billion plan to ensure our armed forces have the equipment they need.

The customisation work is helping to support around 300 jobs at A&P Falmouth. The UK work content in the wider Tide Class programme is worth around £150 million, sustaining further jobs at 27 UK-based companies. The project is being delivered well within budget by the MOD.

Systems to be installed in Falmouth include the communications equipment, self-defence weapons and armour needed to allow the ship to operate in the most challenging environments.

RFA Tidespring. Crown Copyright.

Vice Admiral Simon Lister, who led procurement of the Tide Class at Defence Equipment and Support, said:

RFA Tidespring will be a familiar and reassuring presence for Royal Navy ships as they undertake missions in defence of the UK's interest.

The continued successful delivery of the Tide Class programme, meeting all requirements and under budget stands as a testament to the excellent working relationships which DE&S has built with suppliers in the UK and around the world.

The Tide Class has a flight deck able to accommodate the large Chinook helicopter and offer significant improvements over previous RFA tankers such as double hulls and greater environmental protection measures.