

# **News story: Defence Minister visits small Ipswich company which has played big part in Britain's new aircraft carriers**

HMS Queen Elizabeth, the first of Britain's two new flagship 65,000 tonne aircraft carriers, sailed back into her home base in Portsmouth this week ahead of being formally commissioned into the Royal Navy fleet by Her Majesty the Queen early next month.

Tex Special Projects Ltd, based just outside of Ipswich, Suffolk, played an important role in constructing the Flying Control Room (FLYCO) on-board. The FLYCO is the hub from which the Armed Forces will direct air operations from the Carrier at sea, launching the UK's new F35 jets from her enormous flight deck.

The Flying Control Room on HMS Queen Elizabeth.

The team of just 15 engineers and support staff provided structural, engineering and glazing systems for the FLYCO for both Carriers. The Minister met with employees and was shown a sample of Tex's British designed Maxi-View Tempest glass installed in the FLYCO. The multi-layered laminated panels are over three meters high, making them the largest single panes of glass used on any Royal Navy vessel.

## **Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:**

The largest panes of glass for the biggest ships in Royal Navy history were designed here, by this incredibly impressive small company. Soon our sailors will be watching, through these panes of glass, our F-35 fighter jets take off to defend our country. Our new aircraft carriers are a floating example of British industrial ingenuity and they have helped to boost local businesses right up and down the UK.

## **Chris Parker, Managing Director of Tex Special Projects Ltd said:**

Tex Holdings have long been involved in a variety of Ministry of Defence projects such as designing visual control rooms within air traffic control centres for Royal Air Force and Royal Navy air stations across the UK. For this project we had to design and overcome some very demanding technical challenges, delivering a near uninterrupted 290-degree field of view of the flight deck, which is unparalleled in any nation's warships.

We feel incredibly privileged to have been a part of this very prestigious capital project. For 12 years we have provided our technical expertise and supplied the FLYCO and all the ship's windows, wipers and blades. Without the Queen Elizabeth Class programme the Special Projects Company would never have been formed, so we are extremely grateful for the exceptional opportunity it afforded us.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin paid a visit to Tex Special Projects Ltd.

Tex is one of the hundreds of British small to medium enterprises that has supported the build of the Carriers, which has been a truly national endeavor involving 700 businesses and suppliers. The programme has brought together the best of British industry, with construction taking place across six main cities, involving more than 10,000 people.

Last year saw the MOD's direct spend with smaller business increase by over 10% as the department continues efforts to make it easier for SMEs to win defence business, maximising the innovative solutions they can offer the Armed Forces.

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, as well as a dedicated Twitter account to flag opportunities to SMEs.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin paid a visit to Tex Special Projects Ltd.

---

## [Press release: Sex offender who targeted children online has sentenced increased](#)

Sex offender, Paul Leighton, has had his sentence increased to 20 years in prison

A sex offender who befriended and then blackmailed children online to get them to engage in sexual activity will spend more time in prison after his sentence was referred to the Court of Appeal as unduly lenient.

Paul Leighton, 33, befriended a number of children around the world using fake social media accounts before persuading them to send sexual photos and videos of themselves. If they refused, he would threaten to tell their family members.

Other children were forced into performing sexual acts on their siblings and Leighton also persuaded a 14 year old child in America to rape his baby niece.

Leighton was originally sentenced to 16 years in prison with a 6 year extended licence period at Newcastle Crown Court. His sentence was increased to 20 years in prison with a 7 year extended licence period.

The Solicitor General Robert Buckland QC MP presented the case in Court today and said:

This is a deeply disturbing and serious case. Leighton callously targeted vulnerable children and subjected them to a series of threats, frightening them into complying with his sexual demands.

Such terrible offending deserves a tougher punishment and this increased sentence takes into account the seriousness of this offending.

---

## **Press release: More detail on £1.5 billion package of support for Universal Credit**

More details of the £1.5 billion package of support for Universal Credit were set out today by David Gauke, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

The measures announced include:

- local authorities being able to recoup over 80% of the money they spend on temporary accommodation directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) rather than from the claimant, preventing losses of more than £70 million over 2018/19
- extended partnership working with Citizen's Advice, to provide more face to face support to Universal Credit claimants

This follows the package of improvements for new claimants announced in yesterday's Autumn Budget, including:

- abolishing the 7 waiting day period to reduce the wait for payment from 6 weeks to 5 from February 2018
- extending the repayment of advances from 6 to 12 months, and allowing people to receive 100% of their payment upfront from January 2018 (people who make a claim in December can get a 50% advance, and then in

January can ask for a top up to 100%)

- making it possible for people to apply for advances online from spring 2018, making it even easier for a claimant to access an advance if they need it
- paying an additional 2 weeks' of housing costs after the end of someone's Housing Benefit claim and into their Universal Credit claim from April 2018
- making it easier for claimants to continue having their housing costs paid directly to landlords once they are on Universal Credit

To allow these improvements to be made as quickly as possible, we will also be changing the rate of Universal Credit full service rollout for 3 months from February 2018 to 10 jobcentres a month, increasing to 41 in May 2018.

The [timetable](#) of the Universal Credit full service transition has been updated.

---

## **Press release: Minister for Africa Rory Stewart in Zimbabwe**

Minister for Africa Rory Stewart arrived in Harare on 23 November. He will hold meetings with a range of political leaders from various parties, business representatives, human rights groups, NGOs and civil society. He will also see some of the important development work being carried out here by UK.

### **Minister for Africa, Rory Stewart said:**

This is an absolutely critical moment in Zimbabwe's history.

Zimbabweans suffered for too long as a result of Mugabe's ruinous rule. The events of the last few days have given people here real hope that Zimbabwe can be set on a different, more democratic and more prosperous path.

What comes next must be driven by Zimbabweans – it must be in line with the Zimbabwean constitution and will be impossible without clear resolve from the incoming government. That is what my visit here is all about.

Britain wants to be a genuine partner for Zimbabweans as they forge a new future.

# [News story: DCMS launches £190m Gigabit broadband challenge fund](#)

Last year, the Chancellor announced more than £1bn of funding to stimulate further and faster roll-out of full fibre networks, alongside investment to take forward the next generation of mobile connectivity in all areas of the UK. As part of this, Government has now launched a £190m Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) Challenge Fund to stimulate commercial investment in full fibre networks across the whole of the UK, including rural and urban locations, by demonstrating approaches that encourage additional private investment and by making sustainable commercial deployments viable.

Minister for Digital, Matt Hancock said:

World class connectivity is increasingly essential to people at work and at home. It's vital to ensure the UK's future competitiveness in the global market and our ability to attract investment. Full fibre is fundamental for fashioning a Britain fit for the future.

The projects will enable gigabit capable connections to key public buildings and businesses, with the expectation that this leads to broadband providers creating additional connections to local homes and businesses.

Government is now encouraging a broad range of local bodies – Local Authorities, Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships as well other local public / government bodies such as health, education or transport bodies, to apply to the fund.

This programme comes as part of the government's expanded £31 billion National Productivity Investment Fund aimed at improving productivity, which is key to raising living standards. This fund has already earmarked £740 million specifically for improving Britain's digital infrastructure, ensuring the UK is match-fit for the future.

Further information, and details on how to apply for funding is available [online](#)