

Australian submariners to join Royal Navy crews as UK and Australia deepen defence ties through AUKUS pact

- Royal Australian Navy submariners will join UK crews to train on newly commissioned HMS Anson
- Prime Minister and Defence Secretary host new Australian Deputy Prime Minister at Barrow to see commissioning
- Australian visit strengthens international defence ties in light of trilateral AUKUS partnership, working with the US

It came as he and Defence Secretary Ben Wallace emphasised the importance of the deep defence ties between the UK and Australia, following the development of the trilateral AUKUS partnership working with the United States, who were represented today by their Defence Attaché Captain Leland.

Hosting Australian Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles on his first official visit to the UK since the new Australian government came to power, the Prime Minister and Ministers attended the commissioning of the fifth of seven new Astute-Class Royal Navy submarines, HMS Anson.

With naval capability at the centre of the two powers' future defence relationship, the visit reinforced the priorities of the [Integrated Review](#) and significance of the AUKUS partnership – which links the UK, the United States and Australia in promoting stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

The UK and US have already welcomed Royal Australian Navy personnel on its specialised nuclear training courses, and more will follow next year, before Australian submariners go to sea. The training and exchanges mark the beginning of a multigenerational naval partnership between the three AUKUS nations.

The Australia Deputy Prime Minister – who is also Minister for Defence – visited Barrow having yesterday also seen the Type 26 frigate shipbuilding facility in Govan, accompanied by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Ben Key.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, said:

HMS Anson is the perfect example of where levelling up the UK and generating jobs, skills and growth across our country goes hand-in-glove with Global Britain.

From the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea, our submarine service is protecting the UK and our allies 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and the deployment of Australian submariners alongside our British crews epitomises the strength of the AUKUS partnership.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace, said:

Today is a significant milestone in the UK and Australia's preparation to confront growing threats to the liberal democratic order, especially in the Indo Pacific.

Not only have we progressed our defence planning but Minister Marles participated in the commissioning of our latest attack submarine, on which will Royal Australian Navy submariners will be embarked as we develop our shared capabilities in the years ahead.

Built in a UK shipyard, HMS Anson demonstrates the very best of British industry, sustaining our world-leading sub-surface capabilities and underlining the UK's readiness to contribute them to shared security, especially with our closest allies Australia and the United States under the AUKUS initiative.

One of the most sophisticated underwater vessels ever built, HMS Anson represents £1.3 billion of UK investment. Capable of defending the UK's interests at home and overseas, HMS Anson will be armed with up to 38 Spearfish Heavyweight Torpedoes, and Block V Tomahawk land attack missiles, able to tackle targets at a range of up to 1,000 miles.

Building on commitments made in the Integrated Review, the completion of HMS Anson demonstrates the strength of British industry and its world-leading nuclear technology that will be leveraged to deliver the trilateral AUKUS defence and security partnership between the US, UK and Australia.

First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Ben Key said:

HMS Anson is the cutting edge in submarine design and construction, ensuring operational advantage in the underwater battlespace, the last great stealth domain.

Given the world we live in, there is no more important tool in the United Kingdom's arsenal: silent, unseen, and a key instrument of our global, modern, ready Royal Navy.

In the last year 17,700 Defence jobs were supported through direct spending with UK industry in the North West. More than 11 years in the making and built in BAE Systems' Barrow-in-Furness site, more than 10,000 coders, engineers, scientists, submariners and technicians across the UK were involved in HMS Anson's construction. Powered by a Rolls-Royce nuclear reactor, the boat will be operational for 25 years without refuelling.

At 97 metres long, HMS Anson stands at around the length of two Olympic swimming pools, with 240 kilometres of cabling – enough to stretch from Barrow-In-Furness to its new home in Faslane, Scotland.

HMS Anson will remain in Barrow for the coming weeks while undergoing final checks and rigorous testing to the numerous complex systems that make up a nuclear-powered submarine, before sailing to HM Naval Base Clyde in Faslane to prepare for sea trials.

BAE Systems Chief Executive Charles Woodburn said:

The Astute class submarines are among the finest engineering accomplishments in the world. As the custodian of the UK's submarine design and build capability, we're incredibly proud of the role we play in the delivery of this strategic national endeavour.

The UK has built and operated world-class nuclear-powered submarine capability for over 60 years.

HMS Anson will join four other Astute Class submarines in service with the Royal Navy –HMS Astute, HMS Ambush, HMS Artful and HMS Audacious.

Two further boats – Agamemnon and Agincourt – are in various stages of construction at BAE Systems' Barrow-In-Furness site as part of £11.2 billion overall investment in the whole Astute-Class programme.

[Amy Rees appointed to lead HMPPS](#)

News story

The Ministry of Justice has today (31 August 2022) announced the appointment of a new Chief Executive for Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).



Amy Rees – previously the Director General of Probation, Wales and Youth for HMPPS – will succeed Dr Jo Farrar who will focus on her wider role as Second

Permanent Secretary at the MOJ, including digital transformation of justice services.

Under the restructure, following an operating model review led by the MOJ Permanent Secretary Antonia Romeo, Phil Copple will become Director General of Operations for Prisons and Probation.

Both roles will begin on 1 September 2022 and are part of a wider, ongoing agency transformation placing greater focus on the delivery of frontline services – keeping the public safe, delivering modern prisons that rehabilitate offenders and reducing reoffending.

Having joined HMPPS in 2001, Amy worked in frontline positions at several prisons including HMP Lewes, High Down and Bristol before being appointed Governor at HMP Brixton in 2008.

She has since acted as Executive Director for HMPPS in Wales and was the lead official with the Welsh Government on behalf of the MOJ.

Amy also took on responsibility for the Youth Custody Service, including day-to-day operations and supporting its work to shape the future of children's services in custody.

Phil has been in the Prison service for over 30 years, joining in 1990 as a prison officer. He has governed in a number of prisons including HMP Deerbolt and HMP Frankland and led prisons and probation in the North East region, as NE Director of Offender Management.

Phil took up post as Executive Director Prisons in 2017, before becoming Director General of Prisons in 2019.

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[New vision for a world-leading digital property market](#)

- HM Land Registry launches Strategy 2022+ and three-year Business Plan to guide the next stage of its digital transformation.
- Announces commitment to lead the market in harnessing the power of digital tools and automation to speed up the homebuying process.
- Strategy is supported by the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives, the Conveyancing Association, the Council for Licensed Conveyancers, the Council of Property Search Organisations, the Law Society, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Society of Licensed Conveyancers and UK Finance.

The current homebuying process does not meet some basic expectations for a modern, professional service. We know that people find the process stressful and confusing. HM Land Registry will work with the property market to co-create a homebuying process of the future that is quicker, more efficient and more user friendly, under its new strategy launched today, 31 August 2022.

[Strategy 2022+, 'Enabling a world-leading property market'](#), sets out how HM Land Registry will transform land registration in England and Wales to cut delays for customers and influence the market to realise the potential of cutting-edge digital tools and solutions.

The next stage in transforming HM Land Registry into a global leader in digital land registration sees the organisation taking on a convening role as it invites the UK property sector to work in partnership to create a simpler, paperless and transparent process for buying and selling property which will benefit homeowners across the country.

Also published today is [the new three-year Business Plan](#), a clear roadmap for how the organisation will implement the strategy and deliver improvements for customers.

Chief Executive and Chief Land Registrar of HM Land Registry, Simon Hayes, said:

Strategy 2022+ comes at a pivotal moment. The very high level of activity in the property market in recent times has underlined the urgency with which all players in the market need to work together to improve the system.

With property transactions taking record time to complete, it is imperative that we work as partners to innovate and remove friction so that the process is as quick and painless as possible.

For HM Land Registry, that means a step-change in our offering to customers so that they receive an outstanding, fully digital service.

As we do so, we are placing people – those buying and selling property – at the heart of our transformation.

Business Minister Lord Callanan said:

Industries across the economy stand ready to seize on the digital revolution and the UK's world-renowned property market is no different. The digitisation proposals in this strategy will help the Land Registry deliver more efficient and user-friendly services, while driving productivity and growth for the sector.

These proposals, along with other action the Land Registry is taking such as the completion of a Local Land Charges register,

will provide a boost to households and businesses engaging with the property market throughout the UK, supporting our ambitious Levelling Up agenda.

Automation will bring speed and resilience

For 160 years now, HM Land Registry has served as the critical institution protecting the right to property and enabling the market to operate. The better land registration works, the better conveyancing and the property market function. As such, HM Land Registry's Strategy 2022+ is informed by the need to urgently build the organisation's resilience to volatility in the property market which is the leading cause of application backlogs.

Under the strategy, many more land registration processes will be automated to significantly improve service speeds for customers. Automation, and further investment in our people, will give HM Land Registry the capacity and capability to deliver its services swiftly even in periods of very high demand, ensuring backlogs are a problem of the past.

A significant investment to automate most changes to the land register by 2025 will result in the end-to-end automation of up to 70% of all updates to the register, while maintaining the accurate and fraud-free registers that provide trust and confidence in the property market. Automated applications will be completed within one day – many of them in seconds.

Greater levels of end-to-end automation on simpler application types will also allow us to refocus our expert caseworkers onto the more complex applications that demand their expert judgement, reducing wait times for complex property transactions.

We also want to work with conveyancers who are facing the pressure of increasing demand in the market to help reduce inefficiencies elsewhere in the process. Currently, 1 in 5 applications to HM Land Registry (more than 3,500 applications every day) require us to follow up with the applicant to resolve an issue in the application. This increases to around 2 in 3 for more complex applications. This causes extensive delays to the affected applications and our average speed of service times. We are working hard to help customers reduce avoidable errors in their applications, which will save both us and conveyancers time and money.

Better access to vital information

A lack of upfront information can cause up to 8% of property transactions to fall through, costing the buyer up to £2,700 per transaction. A new drive to rapidly digitise the information the public and conveyancers need most will allow people to access HM Land Registry's information on ownership, location, mortgages, local land charges and more in real time, so that when making a decision, people are better informed and buying and selling property is quicker and less uncertain. This will benefit those involved in all types of property transactions, both residential and commercial.

HM Land Registry's ambitious agenda to work with the property sector to enable property to be bought and sold digitally will see it encouraging the market to adopt new technology – such as digital ID and e-signatures – by introducing new standards and working with property partners to create an open, integrated ecosystem of digital services that support property transactions. This will mean that people only need to provide their information once – rather than sending the same information to different people multiple times throughout the process of a transaction.

Opening up property data to benefit the economy

Strategy 2022+ also sets out HM Land Registry's commitment to open up property data so that it is more transparent, easier to use and supports a strong, sustainable economy and the UK's Net Zero targets. For example, the commitment to complete the new instant-access Local Land Charges register within the next four years is expected to add around £3bn to the UK economy.

We are committed to making our data more findable, accessible, interoperable with other data and reusable (or 'FAIR') to increase its potential to generate insight that helps the government and others tackle complex social, environmental and economic challenges. We will continue to energise innovation in the use of property data, in particular through our Digital Street research and development programme and our Geovation accelerator, which has already supported 137 start-ups to develop new products and services and has created more than 1,500 jobs.

HM Land Registry's strategy is supported by stakeholders from across the property and conveyancing sector.

President of the Law Society of England and Wales, I. Stephanie Boyce, said:

We welcome HM Land Registry's new business strategy and the focus on digital. Technological change in the conveyancing market, which was accelerated because of the COVID-19 pandemic, continues at pace.

We look forward to continuing to work with Land Registry and the industry more widely to further digitise the conveyancing process, to promote better and earlier decision-making and make residential property transactions smoother for buyers and sellers.

Beth Rudolf, Director of Delivery at the Conveyancing Association, said:

In the past HM Land Registry's five-year strategic plans have referenced the move to digital/machine-readable and the creation of notional registers but this time it has already started the process through the delivery of the Digital Registration Service.

This is very encouraging in an industry where we need to be able to

deliver digitally for the consumer and other stakeholders in order to reduce the waste of the extended transaction times and fall-through rates, and to enable the consumer to understand the implications of the title on their intended use and enjoyment to reduce claims and therefore PII premiums.

Covid alert level reduced to two

News story

Alert level has been reduced from three to two



Based on UKHSA advice, the UK Chief Medical Officers and NHS England National Medical Director have recommended to Ministers the COVID Alert Level moves from Level 3 to Level 2.

Hospitals and the wider health systems remain extremely busy overall but the summer BA.4 and BA.5 wave is subsiding and direct COVID severe illness is now a much smaller proportion of this. Severe COVID cases, direct COVID healthcare pressures, direct COVID deaths and ONS community positivity estimates have decreased. COVID remains present in the community and we may see an increase in cases with BA 4.6 and BA.2.75 circulating but do not expect this to lead to an immediate increase in hospital pressures. This will continue to be kept under review. Further COVID surges are likely so please be prepared by getting a vaccination when it is offered.

Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Sir Chris Whitty
Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland, Professor Sir Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, Professor Sir Gregor Smith
Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Professor Chris Jones
NHS England National Medical Director, Professor Sir Stephen Powis.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay and ministers from the devolved administrations have accepted the advice.

Background

The Covid alert levels are as follows:

- level 1: COVID-19 is present in UK, but the number of cases and transmission is low
- level 2: COVID-19 is in general circulation but direct COVID-19 healthcare pressures and transmission are declining or stable
- level 3: a COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation
- level 4: a COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation; transmission is high and direct COVID-19 pressure on healthcare services is widespread and substantial or rising
- level 5: as level 4 and there is a material risk of healthcare services being directly overwhelmed by COVID-19

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Multi-million pound investment brings environmental improvements

Press release

The Environment Agency has worked together with partners to invest almost £3m in environmental improvements in the North East over the past year.



The Tipalt Burn

More than 21 hectares of habitat has been created or improved in the North East over the past year as part of a £3million programme of work to improve the environment for people and wildlife.

Almost 12km of river has been improved and more than 8,000 trees planted, while 32 hectares of stillwaters have been enhanced for fishing.

The North East Environment Programme is managed and delivered by the Environment Agency working mainly in partnership with government backed Catchment Partnerships, bringing together river and wildlife trusts, local authorities and other organisations to improve the environment.

There were almost 50 partners involved in this year's £3million programme, contributing £461,000 in funding.

Key projects progressed in 2021/22 include:

- Blyth Estuary Habitat Enhancement – 27 habitat areas for wildlife created at Port of Blyth to boost the ecology of the estuary
- The EU Life Wader project led by Natural England will see the Environment Agency deliver restoration work on the Rivers Till and Breamish
- The Wilds of Wanney project aimed at improving water quality in the Upper Wansbeck tributaries delivered 1.4km of protection to the Delf Burn and supported the restoration of 4.5ha of habitat
- The Northumberland Crayfish Strategy continued its work to protect the endangered white clawed crayfish with the development of safe breeding 'Ark' sites, a captive breeding programme and an increased public awareness programme.
- Design and installation of a floating ecosystem on the Tyne Estuary at Newcastle Quayside – the first of its kind on a tidal waterbody – as part of the Tyne Estuary Habitat Enhancement project.
- Progressing a Tipalt Burn project to identify priority projects that will improve water quality in the burn, including tree planting, reducing run-off from land into the water and habitat creation.
- Gaunless Reconnected saw interventions at farms to reduce pollution running off farmland and into the river, including cattle crossings, improvements to farm yards and gates. It saw 2,700 trees planted, fencing installed and 300m of riverbank restored.
- Wear Estuary Improvements saw the creation of a 150m² of saltmarsh along the River Wear Estuary – important habitat for marine animals and birds.
- Fish for Tees, aimed at improving fish passage at five sites and opening up 76km of river for fish migration made progress at all sites, with design and delivery the next steps.
- At Billingham Beck, options were developed for improving fish passage and creating and improving habitat.

Fiona Morris Environment Planning and Engagement Manager for the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

There's been a huge variety and scale of projects in this year's programme that have been started and delivered, from protecting iconic species, enhancing and creating habitat and improving water quality.

Together with our partners we are committed to driving forward innovative environmental improvements and continuing to deliver this ambitious programme of environmental improvements for people and wildlife in the North East.

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