

News story: Autonomous supply to military front line: apply for contracts

Updated: Updated news story photograph.

The [Ministry of Defence](#) is to invest in projects that look at ways of using autonomous systems in the 'last mile' of the supply chain to front-line military operations.

Up to £1.5 million is available in the first phase of the competition. There is up to an additional £1.5 million in phase 2 that includes proposed system designs. This will only be available to projects funded through phase 1.

A third phase could include a longer period of trials and evaluation of promising proposals.

Last mile supply

Last-mile resupply involves delivery of combat materials from a physical base or logistics vehicle and is often challenging because of the hostile and contested environment. Although described as last-mile, real-life distances could be up to 30km in some instances.

Current ways of supplying the front line involve transport aircraft, helicopters, large trucks, trailers with quad bikes and soldiers on foot.

The challenge areas

This funding competition is particularly looking for solutions in 3 challenge areas:

- unmanned air and ground load-carrying platforms
- technologies and systems that allow load-carrying platforms to operate autonomously
- technologies to autonomously predict, plan, track and optimise re-supply demands from military users

The competition is for fully funded contracts under SBRI (Small Business Research Initiative).

[Find out more about SBRI.](#)

Competition information

- the competition is open, and the deadline for applications is midday on 21 June 2017
- the competition is for fully funded development contracts
- phase 1 contracts are likely to be worth between £40,000 and £80,000 and last up to 6 months
- a networking event for potential applicants will take place on 23 May 2017
- there will be a webinar for potential applicants on 30 May 2017

[Find out more about this competition and apply.](#)

News story: HMS Enterprise returns home after three years on Navy operations

During her time away she helped to stop people smuggling across the globe, saved thousands of lives at sea, and protected Britain's interests.

Minister of State for the Armed Forces Mike Penning said:

During her three years deployed away from the UK, HMS Enterprise and her ship's company have helped make the world a safer place.

From disrupting people smuggling in the Mediterranean to assisting in the free flow of trade in the Gulf, and from providing reassurance to our overseas territories to surveying the world's oceans, she has epitomised how the Royal Navy is protecting the UK's global interests.

In almost three years she has steamed 150,000 nautical miles, visited 20 countries, and navigated four of the seven seas.



LH Payne with his twins girls Summer and Amelia

HMS Enterprise's epic deployment began in June 2014, when she headed to the Mediterranean on a routine deployment. At the time, growing unrest in Libya led to the UK government encouraging British citizens to evacuate, and Enterprise was tasked with rescuing more than 200 people from Libya.

She was then tasked with conducting survey operations in the Gulf and southern Red Sea, joining the continuous Royal Navy presence in the region which works to secure some of the most vital shipping lanes in the world and protect Britain's economy.

It was during this time that teams from the ship volunteered to visit an orphanage in India, helping to refurbish several classrooms, build some swings and even fix a trampoline.

Enterprise later moved to the Mediterranean where she joined the naval force set up to deal with people smuggling. Over the course of the following year, the sailors on board destroyed over 100 unseaworthy craft and rescued over 9000 people. As a result she was awarded the Firmin Sword of Peace, the Naval Capability Prize and the HM Efficiency Award, as well as receiving a personal commendation from the Chief of the Defence Staff.



P0 Everson accepts the Firmin Sword from Minister for the Armed Forces Mike Penning

Following the heat of the Mediterranean Enterprise was re-tasked to the South Atlantic to stand in for Falkland Islands patrol vessel HMS Clyde during her refit in South Africa.

The ship, and her crew of 78 sailors, returned to Devonport today for the warmest of welcomes from friends and families. Commander Philip Harper, Commanding Officer of HMS Enterprise said;

The crew of HMS Enterprise are justly proud of the work they have done since deploying, and the wide variety of operations will be hard to match in the rest of our careers.

At the same time, we are all really looking forward to coming home. The results of our deployment speak for themselves and we are all eager to spend some time with our families before the ship deploys again later this year.

RAF Engineering Competition

2018 is the National Year of the Engineer and to coincide with that, the RAF has just launched its first ever Engineering Competition.

The competition is an 18-month team challenge, with cash prizes, that aims to encourage a widespread interest in engineering across the Whole Force and to inspire people of all ages to get involved in Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM).



There will be 2 competitions run in parallel: a Senior Competition and a separate Youth Engagement Competition. The Senior Competition is open to: all RAF personnel across all trades and branches; the Whole Force & Joint participants in teams comprising a majority of RAF personnel; the Defence Technical Undergraduate Scheme (DTUS); and University Air Squadrons (UAS). The Youth Engagement Competition is open to: RAF Air Cadets including CCF(RAF), Air Scouts and the Girls Venture Corps.

To encourage maximum breadth of thought and vision and to promote innovation, ingenuity and Thinking to Win (T2W), entries can be submitted against 4 broad themes:

- * Royal Air Force – the next 100 years.
- * Size, weight and power.
- * Height, reach, speed and endurance.
- * The Information Age.



The Competition will run in 2 distinct Phases. Phase 1 is when teams can register their interest and then submit their concept (what, why, how) with a rough outline design. All submissions will then be judged and sifted with 15 entries from both competitions proceeding to the Finals.

In Phase 2, each of the 30 Finalist teams will receive £3000 to aid concept refinement and production of a prototype or concept demonstrator. They will also have access to a pool of Industry Mentors. The overall Competition will culminate with a finale event in Autumn 2018 which will include a pitch to a panel of expert judges drawn from senior RAF, Industry, PEI, Entrepreneurs & Inspirational figures followed by an Awards Ceremony with the following prizes.

Senior Competition	Youth Engagement Competition
Winners: £5000	Winners: Flight Sim for the unit + STEM Bundle

Second Place: £2000	Second Place: STEM Bundle + VIP visit (Industrial visit, Red Arrows, RAF Stn, or Bloodhound Project)
DTUS/UAS Academic Excellence Award: £1000	All Finalists: STEM Bundle
Women in Engineering Award for best all-female team: £1000	
Ingenuity Award for originality of thought: £1000	

The Competition launches on 18 Apr 17 and to view the rules, FAQs and promotional material simply go to the Competition website [here](#)

Teams need to Register by 1 Aug 17, with concept entries submitted by e-mail by 1 Oct 17. The outcome of Phase 1 judging will be announced in Nov 17.

The central STEM theme gives the wider RAF Family a chance to participate in the national drive to inspire the next generation. The Competition is aligned with the RAF's Strategic Objectives of Building a Workforce Fit for the Future and Delivering the Next Generation Air Force Capability. It will also Embrace 'T2W' through innovation in engineering and deliver activities that help to Promote Women into Science and Engineering (WISE) whilst retaining and attracting RAF personnel in STEM roles.

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[News story: HMS Sutherland escorts two Russian warships past UK coastline](#)

The Type 23 frigate located the two Russian ships in the early hours of Friday morning [14 Apr 17] as they sailed through the North Sea towards the Dover Straits.

The Steregushchiy-class corvettes, Soobrazitelny and Boiky, were joined later in the afternoon by a Russian support tanker and an ocean-going tug.

HMS Sutherland will continue to monitor the movements of the ships as they pass close to UK territorial waters today.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

HMS Sutherland is carefully marking these Russian ships as they pass close to UK waters. The Royal Navy maintains a vigilant watch and is always ready to keep Britain safe.

Royal Navy sailors on the Plymouth-based frigate keep watch on every movement

of the ships, using state-of-the-art radars to track the course and speed of the ships as they pass close to the UK.



HMS Sutherland is escorting the Russian ships. Crown Copyright.

Commander Andrew Canale, the Commanding Officer of HMS Sutherland, said:

As one of the Royal Navy's high readiness units, HMS Sutherland is required to escort warships that approach the UK and this task is considered routine business for us.

It is vitally important the Royal Navy demonstrates its presence and commitment to the integrity of UK territorial waters as we work around the clock to secure the seas of our island nation.

As a high-readiness unit, HMS Sutherland may be called upon at any time to help prevent arms trafficking, people smuggling, conduct counter-terrorism operations, maritime search and rescue, or escort duties like those it is undertaking today.

News story: £22.7 Million awarded to support older veterans

The money will help organisations across the country to continue the invaluable work they do to support older veterans, which includes providing access to health care and carers, support with using the internet, and offering general advice.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Our veterans have given so much for their country, and the Aged Veterans Fund is a way of us thanking our older veterans and ensuring they are cared for in later life.

One of the awards, totalling almost £4 million, went to Poppyscotland who manage 14 projects under its Unforgotten Forces programme, which provides wellbeing improvements to homes, helps to prevent veterans from feeling isolated, and support to those who suffer hearing problems.

Mark Bibbey Chief Executive at Poppyscotland said:

We want people to understand that key organisations in the area of support provision have joined forces to provide a more holistic provision for aged veterans. If a veteran is engaged with one organisation, for example, they can immediately be referred to another – or multiple consortium members if required. The essence is strength in numbers and we want the identity of our consortium to reflect this.

Age UK received £4.4 million for its Joining Forces scheme, which gives up to 12 weeks of tailored support for older veterans across the country, providing information and advice, practical support at home, access to social events and digital technology, and opportunities to become more active.

Steve Hampson, Head of Innovation & Programmes at Age UK said:

Joining Forces allows us to build on the work we already do across the country with older veterans and to reach out to those who may need more support. The grant means we can develop and test our services, and learn more about how best to support older veterans to get more out of later life. Our work has at its core what older people want to achieve for themselves.

£4.8 million was awarded to the Legion Healthy Living Portfolio, led by The

Royal British Legion, to promote healthy living through a number of ways including local activities, research to improve services, and the training of specialist staff.

Steve Baynes, Head of Grants and Social Policy at The Royal British Legion said:

This grant will help the Legion continue its work with a network of charities, supporting the Armed Forces community through thick and thin. In particular, the grant will enable us and our partners to focus on achieving lasting social change for aged veterans. The veterans to benefit will be from a range of communities, including those who are at risk of becoming socially isolated, struggling with their physical or mental health, with hearing loss or in residential care. Many of the projects will also benefit carers and family members of those who Served, and some are research-oriented so that we, as a society, are better informed of current and emerging needs.

The ten charities to receive the awards are Age UK, Poppyscotland, The Royal British Legion, the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association, Cornwall Rural Community Charity, Rural Action Yorkshire, St Johns and Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service, Age Cymru, Seafarers UK, and Hospice UK.

The Aged Veterans Fund which was set up in 2015, had a total of £30 million of LIBOR funds available to support older veterans.

It is designed to support non-core health, wellbeing, and social care needs for older veterans (born before 1 January 1950), including surviving Second World War veterans, those who undertook National Service, and other voluntary enlisted veterans who may need some focused support in relation to their health and social care needs.

This final round of awards comes after the Aged Veterans Fund initially granted £6.6 million to eight organisations in 2016.