

[Press release: Milestone reached for Ipswich Flood Barrier scheme](#)

The cofferdam, which is a structure that can be pumped dry to enable construction of the barrier to take place below the river bed level, is now in place.

Over the last few months, VBA the contractors working for the EA, have installed the cofferdam, pumped it dry and they have now excavated the river silts and gravel.

The next stage is to pour the base slab, which is more than 700 cubic metres of reinforced concrete. At the moment the steel reinforcement is being placed by a team of 20 people and the first pour of the base slab will be completed in the next couple of weeks.

The actual tidal gate is being fabricated in Holland and will be delivered later in the year when the concrete structure and control building have been completed.

Progress has been made elsewhere on the site, with the foundations for the flood walls and the control building now installed.

The project, which will reduce the risk of flooding to 1,608 homes and 422 businesses and support key infrastructure, has been partnership funded by: the Environment Agency, Ipswich Borough Council, Department for Communities and Local Government, the Haven Gateway Partnership, and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership.

EA project manager Andrew Usborne said:

The integrated team at the barrier are making good progress and are on programme to complete the works in spring 2018.

I am really looking forward to the next key milestone, which is the delivery of the tidal gate from Holland later in the summer.

Nick Culshaw, VBA operations director, said:

It has been a real honour to be working with and supporting the EA on this vital project in Ipswich. In order to protect around 2,000 properties, both commercial and residential, within the town from flooding in the future, a 20m wide tidal barrier gate, along with the relevant controls, will be installed.

The barrier, along with additional flood defences undertaken by VBA, will prevent any surge tides and allow the control of fluvial flow as required in the future.

The scheme is due to be completed in 2018.

If you're worried about the risk of flooding to you or a vulnerable person check your flood risk and other information here: <http://ow.ly/SWdMz>. Sign up for Flood Warnings here: <http://ow.ly/SWdVp>. Alternatively you can call Floodline on: 0345 988 1188 or sign up for Facebook Flood alerts at: <http://ow.ly/SWdVp>

[News story: 'Catalogue of failures' led to collision in the Humber in May 2016](#)

David Carlin, the master of the World War II motor launch Peggotty and Thomas Neilsen, master of the Danish flagged Petunia Seaway were both prosecuted under section 58 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995, as a result of an investigation by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency.

Both pleaded guilty to conduct endangering ships under the Act when they appeared at Hull Magistrates Court today (3rd February).

At around 4.30am on 19th May 2016 Peggotty, a 50 foot vessel, had left Grimsby Docks making its way to Hull. Although this was a private voyage, Mr Carlin as a professional master mariner and Humber pilot was very experienced.

However, despite the thick fog he failed to comply with a number of regulations to keep his and other vessels safe. These included failing to make his vessel's radar operational, failing to make sound signals and failing to ensure all the navigation lights were working. He had also not taken the conditions into account or prepared an effective passage plan for the journey and was relying on an untested mobile phone app.

At the same time, the Petunia Seaway, a vehicle transport vessel, 200 metres long and 34,000 gross tonnage was making its way down the Humber towards Grimsby. Its master Thomas Neilsen, from Denmark, was on the bridge and in charge. He allowed the vessel to proceed at 14 knots in zero visibility, without making sound signals. Mr Neilsen also failed to properly monitor and assess the ship's radar to appreciate they were bearing down on the Peggotty.

Mr Carlin on his part had not realised the Peggotty was in the main shipping

channel and was effectively blind to the collision course his vessel was on with the Petunia Seaway. Just before 4.50am the two vessels collided almost head on. The Peggotty was able to pass down the port side of the much larger Petunia Seaways, scraping down the side as it went. However the impact was enough to damage the hull of the Peggotty and it began to take on water. Mr Carlin was able to broadcast a Mayday call and the two on board were picked up by a nearby pilot boat before the Peggotty sank and was lost.

Today they were sentenced at Hull Magistrates Court. The district judge said that Mr Carlin for his part had a catalogue of failures, while Mr Neilsen's actions were insufficient.

As well as fining both of them £3,000 each, the district judge also ordered Mr Neilsen to pay £9,318.20 in costs as well as a £170 surcharge. Mr Carlin was told he would have to pay £6,568 costs plus the £170 surcharge.

Gwen Lancaster, surveyor in charge at the Maritime & Coastguard Agency's Hull Marine Office said: 'I am both surprised and disappointed that this collision, which could easily have resulted in far worse consequences for those onboard the Peggotty, occurred in the first place.

'Both vessels were under the command of experienced professional captains who should have known better. This whole incident reflects complacency on their part in addition to a blatant disregard for the rules designed to prevent collisions occurring at sea.

'The Maritime & Coastguard Agency will prosecute those who endanger themselves and others in this way and our message is clear – there is no room for complacency where safety is concerned.

'Masters of vessels must ensure they are properly prepared for the prevailing conditions and proceed in a safe manner whilst using all means of safe navigation at their disposal, to best effect.'

[News story: Request for supplier feedback on Local Land Charges procurement documents](#)

From:

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3 February 2017

Land Registry is requesting supplier feedback on the draft of procurement

documents about Digitisation and Transformation.

Digitisation and Transformation forms part of the wider Digitisation and Migration procurement to migrate paper, electronic and/or digital data from 326 LLC registers into the required spatial digital register at Land Registry.

We would like feedback from the supplier market on our draft Statement of Requirements and Digitisation Practice Guide.

These will form part of the upcoming Digitisation and Transformation procurement.

Potential suppliers interested in the Digitisation and Transformation procurement are invited to preview the documents and provide comments.

[Press release: Planned roadworks in and around the M25: weekly summary for Monday 6 February to Sunday 12 February 2017](#)

The following summary of planned new and ongoing road improvements over the coming week is correct as of 03 February 2017 but could be subject to change due to weather conditions or unforeseen circumstances. All our improvement work is carried out with the aim of causing as little disruption as possible.

M3 junctions 2 (M25) to 4a Farnborough, Hampshire: smart motorway improvement

Work to reduce congestion and improve journey times continues this week with narrow lanes a 50mph speed limit in place on both carriageways between junctions 2 and 4a, with a free recovery service operating 24 hours a day. The northbound carriageway between junctions 3 and 2 will be closed overnight, between 8pm and 5.30am, from Monday 6 February for 5 nights. Work on Saturday morning will finish at 7am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the A322 and A30, M25 junction 13 and M25 junction 12.

The southbound carriageway between junctions 2 and 3 will be closed overnight, between 8pm and 5.30am, from Monday 6 February for 5 nights. Work on Saturday morning will finish at 7am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via M25 junction 13, A30, A322 to M3 junction 3.

The carriageway in both directions between junctions 4 and 4a will be closed overnight, between 8pm and 5.30am, from Monday 6 February for 5 nights. Work on Saturday morning will finish at 7am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the A331, A30, and A327 to M3 junction 4a and vice versa.

M3 junction 2 (M25), Surrey: smart motorway improvement

Work to improve journeys by carrying out smart motorway improvement continues this week. The dedicated link road from the M3 southbound to the M25 clockwise will be closed overnight, between 8pm and 5.30am, from Tuesday 7 February for 4 nights. Work on Saturday morning will finish at 7am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the M25 anti-clockwise to junction 11 and return.

M25 junction 14 Stanwell Moor, Surrey: vegetation maintenance

Work to maintain safety by carrying out vegetation maintenance will start this week. The clockwise exit and entry slip roads will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5am, from Monday 6 February for 4 nights. A clearly signed diversion will be in place for the exit slip road via M25 junction 15, M4 eastbound to junction 4 and return. A clearly signed diversion will be in place for the entry slip road via junction 13 and return.

M25 Heathrow Terminal 5, Greater London: vegetation maintenance

Work to maintain safety by carrying out vegetation maintenance will start this week. The dedicated link road from Heathrow Airport Terminal 5 to the M25 clockwise will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5am, from Monday 6 February for 4 nights. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via M25 junction 13 and return.

M25 junction 15 (M4), Greater London: drainage survey

Work to maintain safety by carrying out drainage surveys will start this week. The dedicated link road from the M25 clockwise to the M4 westbound will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5am, from Tuesday 7 February for 4 nights. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the M4 eastbound to junction 4 and return.

M25 junction 19 (A41), Hertfordshire: drainage repair

Work to maintain safety by carrying out drainage repairs continues this week.

The clockwise exit slip road will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5.30am, from Monday 6 February for 5 nights. Work on Friday will start at 11pm. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via junction 20 and the A41.

M25 junction 22 London Colney, Hertfordshire: electrical repair

Work to maintain safety by carrying out electrical repairs continues this week. The clockwise exit slip road will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5am, on Tuesday 7 February. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via junction 23 and return.

M25 junction 25 Enfield, Greater London: electrical repair

Work to maintain safety by carrying out electrical repairs will start this week. The clockwise entry slip road will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5am, on Thursday 9 January. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via junction 24 and return.

M25 junction 30 Thurrock, Essex: resurfacing

Work to improve journeys by carrying out resurfacing continues this week. The clockwise exit slip road will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5.30am, from Monday 6 February for 5 nights. Work on Friday will start at 11pm. A clearly signed diversion will be in place for the A13 eastbound via the newly constructed dedicated link road from the M25 clockwise to the A13 eastbound.

A clearly signed diversion will be in place for the A13 westbound via the newly constructed dedicated link road from the M25 clockwise to the A13 eastbound, to the A126 and return.

The anti-clockwise exit slip road will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5.30am, from Monday 6 February for 5 nights. Work on Friday will start at 11pm. A clearly signed pre-diversion will be in place for the A13 via M25 junction 31 and the A1306 to the Wennington Interchange.

M25 junctions 31 Lakeside to 30 Thurrock, Essex: major improvement

Work to improve journeys by carrying out resurfacing continues this week. The northbound link road between junctions 31 and will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5.30am, from Monday 6 February for 5 nights. Work on Friday will start at 11pm. A clearly signed diversion will be in place for the M25 anti-clockwise will be in place via the junction 31 roundabout, A1306, A13 eastbound and the newly constructed dedicated link road from the A13 eastbound to the M25 anti-clockwise. A clearly signed diversion will be in place for the A13 via M25 junction 31, A1306 and the A13.

M25 junction 12 (M3), Surrey: smart motorway improvement

Work to improve journeys by carrying out smart motorway improvement continues this week. The dedicated link roads from the M25 clockwise to the M3 in both directions will be closed overnight, between 8pm and 5.30am, on Monday 6 February. A clearly signed diversion will be in place for the M3 southbound via junction 13, A30 and the A322 to M3 junction 3. A clearly signed diversion will be in place for the M3 northbound via M25 junction 13 and return.

The dedicated link road from the M25 in both directions to the M3 southbound will be closed overnight, between 8pm and 5.30am, from Monday 6 February for 5 nights. Work on Saturday morning will finish at 7am. A clearly signed diversion from the M25 clockwise will be in place via M25 junction 13, A30 and the A322 to M3 junction 3. A clearly signed pre-diversion from the M25 anti-clockwise will be in place via junction 13, A30 and the A322 to M3 junction 3.

M40 junction 1a (M25), Buckinghamshire: resurfacing

Work to improve journeys by carrying out resurfacing will start this week. The dedicated link road from the M40 eastbound to the M25 in both directions will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5am, on Tuesday 7 February. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via M40 junction 1 and return.

A1(M) junctions 4 Hatfield North and 2 Welham Green, Hertfordshire: tunnel maintenance

Work to maintain safety by carrying out maintenance in the Hatfield Tunnel will start this week. The A1(M) southbound between junctions 4 and 2 will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5am, on Wednesday 8 February and on Friday 10 February. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the A1001.

A1(M) junctions 3 Hatfield South and 4 Hatfield North, Hertfordshire: tunnel maintenance

Work to maintain safety by carrying out maintenance in the Hatfield Tunnel will start this week. The A1(M) northbound between junctions 3 and 4 will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5am, on Thursday 9 February and Saturday 11 February. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the A1001.

A1(M) junction 6 Welwyn, Hertfordshire: resurfacing

Work to improve journeys by carrying out resurfacing will start this week. The northbound exit slip road will be closed overnight, between 11pm and 5am, on Friday 10 February. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via junction 7 and return.

A2 Dartford Heath, Kent: electrical repair

Work to maintain safety by carrying out electrical repairs continues this week. The eastbound entry slip road will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5am, on Monday 6 February. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the Black Prince interchange and return.

A13 (M25), Essex: resurfacing

Work to improve journeys by carrying out resurfacing will start this week. The A13 westbound exit slip road will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5.30am, from Monday 6 February for 5 nights. Work on Friday will start at 11pm. A clearly signed diversion will be in place for the M25 clockwise via the A13 westbound, A1306 and M25 junction 31 roundabout. A clearly signed diversion will be in place for the M25 anticlockwise via the A13 westbound to the A1306 and return on the A13 eastbound and the newly constructed dedicated link road from the A13 eastbound to the M25 anti-clockwise.

The A13 eastbound exit slip will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5.30am, from Monday 6 February for 5 nights. Work on Friday will start at 11pm. A clearly signed diversion will be in place for the M25 anti-clockwise via the newly constructed dedicated link road from the A13 eastbound to the M25 anti-clockwise. A clearly signed diversion for the M25 clockwise will be in place via the newly constructed dedicated link road from the A13 eastbound to the M25 anti-clockwise, M25 junction 29 and return.

A21 Chipstead, Kent: electrical installation

Work to improve safety by carrying out electrical installation will start this week. The dedicated link road from the A21 northbound to the M25 clockwise at junction 5 will be closed overnight, between 10pm and 5.30am, from Wednesday 8 February for 5 consecutive nights. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via M25 junction 4 and return.

A282 (M25) Dartford – Thurrock Crossing: maintenance

Work to improve journeys at the Dartford Crossing continues this week. The following closures will be in place with fully signed diversions in place during the northbound east tunnel closures for oversized vehicles:

- Monday 6 February (9pm to 5.30am) northbound west tunnel
- Tuesday 7 February (9pm to 5.30am) northbound west tunnel
- Wednesday 8 February (9pm to 5.30am) northbound west tunnel
- Thursday 9 February (9pm to 5.30am) northbound west tunnel
- Friday 10 February (9pm to 5.30am) northbound east tunnel
- Saturday 11 February (9pm to 5.30am) northbound west tunnel
- Sunday 12 February (9pm to 5.30am) northbound west tunnel A282 junction 1a Swanscombe, Kent: tunnel maintenance

Work to maintain safety by carrying out tunnel maintenance continues this week. The northbound entry slip road will be closed overnight, between 9pm and 5.30am from Monday 6 February for 7 consecutive nights. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the A282 southbound to junction 1b and return.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Speech: First Sea Lord speech on the Royal Navy in 2017](#)

After 23 years as a member, 2 on the Committee and nearly 6 on the Navy Board, it's a pleasure to attend Founders Day as First Sea Lord and to share a few insights with you as I approach my first anniversary in the job.

Over the past year, I've had the privilege to represent the Royal Navy extensively at home and abroad.

Last spring, the nation paused to remember the centenary of the Battle of Jutland. I met many descendants, including the family of Jack Cornwell VC, at the unveiling of his memorial in Leyton. His great, great, nephew, AB Alex Saridis, is now serving in HMS Iron Duke, proof that our career managers have a sense of history.

Later, I was in Liverpool for the 75th Anniversary of the Arctic Convoys, where I met some remarkable veterans of "the worst journey in the world." I also had the honour of presenting the Lord Mayor of Liverpool with her late father's Arctic Star.

In both cases I was reminded of how deep the British public's affection for the Royal Navy runs.

Then, towards the end of the year, I was in Auckland for the 75th Anniversary of the Royal New Zealand Navy. Even though that nation has successfully forged its own distinct place in the world, the familial bonds between our two navies are no less strong.

But, without doubt, the best thing about the past year has been hearing about the accomplishments of our sailors and marines.

One that sticks in the mind was the father of new-born twins who, in spite of the sleepless nights, had been inspirational in leading his department to design and train force protection teams for HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Another was a marine engineering submariner who worked in excess of 100 hours a week to bring a 30-year old Trafalgar-class nuclear submarine out of maintenance and ready for sea ahead of schedule.

Then there was the young Leading Medical Assistant from HMS Enterprise who led the triage process for hundreds of rescued migrants, dealing with pregnancies, gunshot wounds and everything in between.

That particular mission is ongoing. HMS Echo was the only ship from the EU's Operation Sophia on duty over Christmas, in which time she pulled another 500 men, women and children from the Mediterranean.

We can be very proud of the compassion and professionalism of our sailors and marines in responding to what is possibly the largest humanitarian in our lifetimes.

But if you worry that our fighting instincts are in some way being softened, I would simply point you to the Gulf, where Commander Amphibious Task Group, Commodore Andrew Burns, and his staff are leading CTF-50, which plans and conducts coalition strike operations in a region where the threat level has the potential to escalate quickly.

They are embarked in HMS Ocean, currently our largest warship – but the men and women of our smaller vessels are no less mindful of the seriousness of their responsibilities.

In the face of almost daily provocation, the young ship's companies of the Gibraltar Squadron – led by Commanding Officers still in their twenties – are exhibiting judgement and restraint beyond their years and, in doing so, have revealed a bold and assertive style of ship handling in the very highest traditions of the service.

I have every expectation that there is a future Nelson or Cunningham among them.

Everything I have seen and heard since I become First Sea Lord has reaffirmed my faith that our nation is blessed with the best sailors and marines of any navy, supported by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and a Civil Service that remains the envy of the world.

Of course, you would expect me to say this, and this audience knows it anyway – many of you helped lay the foundations upon which today's Navy rests. But now, more than ever, we must ensure the nation understands how hard our men and women are working on its behalf.

Three Theatres

As for the operational context, I do not intend to dwell too heavily, because it should be plainly apparent from the newspapers, not least those images of

the Admiral Kuznetsov belching out black smoke like a dreadnought of yesteryear as she steamed past our shores.

In the Atlantic, our commitment to NATO continues to grow. In Norway, the Royal Marines have been training the US Marine Corps in cold weather warfare. Underwater, the Deterrent edges ever closer to a half-century of unbroken patrol, while our attack submarines have been very busy indeed, in ways that many of you know well, and the rest will have to imagine.

As for the Mediterranean, for many of us it was a place where we enjoyed the company of FOST as we worked up to go East of Suez. Now, sadly, it has become an operational theatre in its own right, as we respond to the concurrent challenges of Russians, Radicals and Refugees, to borrow a phrase from SACEUR.

We've been leaning heavily on the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and on our survey ships and patrol vessels in this theatre, and they have stepped up to the plate in the most remarkable way.

HMS Mersey, for example, will shortly return from a 13 month deployment that began in the Caribbean and ended 38,000 miles later in the Aegean; an astonishing accomplishment for a vessel under 2000 tonnes and a ship's company of just 52.

I should also mention our reservists – rarely in the limelight – who have been serving on Border Force Cutters in the Aegean. If your memories of the RNR are of weekends team sweeping with the 10th MCM Squadron, that's ancient history now. They are serving right alongside their regular counterparts in almost everything we do.

Finally, the Foreign Secretary recently told the Manama Dialogue that "Britain is back East of Suez".

He's not wrong – but, in truth, the Gulf has been the Royal Navy's 'home from home' for the past thirty-five years, and today, at any one time, we have a minimum of 7 ships and 1100 sailors and marines in the region, plus two naval helicopter detachments.

Royal Marines are a big part of our presence in the wider Middle East, with training teams visiting Kenya, Somaliland and Kuwait to name just a few examples.

I could say more about all three theatres – and our other duties – but, suffice to say, the world is getting less certain and less safe, and demands on the Royal Navy are growing.

Perspective

This brings me to the crux of what I want to say tonight, which is about our challenges and opportunities.

The word I keep coming back to is perspective – perspective on the kind of Navy we are today, and perspective on the kind of Navy we can be in the years

ahead.

You will be familiar with much of the recent coverage of the Type 45 destroyers, which in many ways is emblematic of the challenges we face more widely.

This was the first new destroyer type in over thirty years. Almost every system on board was designed from scratch. In the end, the power and propulsion system fell short of what we hoped, but the air defence system turned out to exceed all expectations.

It's not ideal, but the money is now in place to put it right. Had the problem been the other way around, it would have been altogether more difficult to fix.

But the real truth about the Type 45 is to be found not in the pages of newspapers but at the sharp end of operations.

Last year, HMS Defender spent over 100 days protecting US and French carrier groups in the Middle East without losing a single day of tasking to machinery defects.

Meanwhile, following attacks on coalition vessels by Houthi rebels, HMS Daring was quietly deployed to the coast of Yemen.

Her ship's company spent 39 days in Defence Watches and over 97 hours at Action Stations as they accompanied 650,000 tonnes of coalition shipping through the Bab-el-Mandeb strait at the height of the threat.

This kind of mission – in this kind of environment – is precisely that for which the Type 45 was conceived.

Where it matters most, the Type 45 has proved itself to be one of the most capable air defence destroyers in the world, and the escort of choice for our most important, and demanding, coalition partners.

We demand the best from our people and equipment and, in doing so, the challenges we face are those of a first rate Navy.

The same is true across the board.

The financial constraints we face are shared across the public sector, and the scrutiny, regulation and efficiency challenges by our partner navies.

Our most pressing manpower shortfalls are not unique to the Royal Navy either – many of the same issues apply to other technology-dependent organisations, and we are working with industry to bring forward the next generation of engineers to meet both our needs.

Yet despite these challenges, the Royal Navy retains a position of global leadership, as evidenced by the international success of FOST and BRNC, and our permanent leadership roles in NATO and the Middle East.

I was in Manila in the autumn to represent CDS at a US PACOM-sponsored conference of military leaders from the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. It was apparent that many of the most significant security issues in that part of the world are maritime in character, and our friends want to work with and learn from the Royal Navy – indeed, last year I signed a historic agreement for closer cooperation with the Japanese Navy.

So the Royal Navy still sets the international maritime standard and the demand is growing. This, more than anything else, is the measure of the kind of Navy we are.

Of course I recognise we have challenges. Much of my time is spent working with Ministers, the Head Office and my fellow Chiefs to put them right. But everything is relative, and my job is to lead the Navy to make the most of the resources we have – and the significant investment coming our way – in order to be the best Navy we can. I am grateful for the support, the leadership and the commitment of my top team and Navy Board colleagues here tonight.

There's a lot of difficult work involved, but our efforts now will shape the Navy – and the UK's place in the world – for decades to come.

So as we grip these challenges, it's critical that we don't sell ourselves short, or lose our long term focus.

Because the single most important factor in our success is belief: our people need to believe in the Navy's future in order to believe in their own future within the Service.

But we can't do it alone. The Navy Board and I need you – our friends and advocates – right behind us.

Opportunity

In drawing to a close, let me add a final, personal, perspective.

The 35th anniversary of the Falklands Conflict is now just a few weeks away.

As the senior serving veteran, I am looking forward to playing my part to ensure the contribution, and the sacrifice, of all those involved in that extraordinary endeavour is recognised.

Today, we rightly marvel at the audacity of our accomplishment in that campaign, so far from home.

Yet, as many of you well know, the early 1980s was far from a happy time for the Royal Navy in capability terms.

The submarine force was growing but everything else was either shrinking or, in the case of our amphibious capability, about to go altogether.

That included my own ship, HMS Fearless.

So if you'd told 21-year-old Acting Sub Lt Philip Jones that in 35 years' time he would be leading the Royal Navy as it renewed the nuclear deterrent, commissioned two 65,000 tonne strike carriers and fifth generation fighters, reopened a naval base East of Suez, with a construction programme for submarines and frigates stretching far into the future, I'm not sure he would've believed you...but he would probably have been quite pleased.

Yet those are the hard facts of where we are today.

And the impending arrival of the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers is just the beginning.

Last December, the Prime Minister stood on the deck of HMS Ocean and told the assembled audience that the Royal Navy was central to her vision for Britain to forge a new positive, confident role for our country on the global stage.

The Government has stated – repeatedly – its intention to increase the overall size of the Navy by the 2030s, and now the Type 31e programme is in train to do just that.

So, the vision for the Navy is clear; the equipment is on its way; and the possibilities are growing – what is required now is the sustained focus and effort to reach out and grasp the opportunity.

In short, I cannot remember a time when the Royal Navy has been more relevant to the UK's security challenges, or more important to our global ambitions.

I'm not alone – people are listening – and the real scandal would be if we allowed this precious opportunity to slip through our fingers.

So we mustn't be distracted from our course or dissuaded in our efforts.

We must be guided by the ambition that has been set for the Navy, and judged by our achievements on operations.

I am convinced that if we do these things, and do them well, then we cannot fail.

Thank you.