

Letter to Defence Secretary

Dear Ben

I am writing in support of more UK procurement of defence equipment in general, and about naval vessels in particular.

The MOD has promised to reboot the competition to acquire three supply vessels in the Fleet Solid Support Programme. This would be a good opportunity to add them to the list of vessels that are put out to tender for UK shipyards. I appreciate we need to increase the UK capacity and competitiveness of ship yards, but we will only do so by offering them a more sustained workload. The MOD did buy the large tankers from foreign yards recently which missed an important opportunity.

I was pleased to see the UK taking delivery of 5 Offshore patrol vessels, and inviting proposals for renewal of smaller patrol vessels for Gibraltar. As we move to take control of our fishing grounds at the end of this year, and need to reinforce our border policing against various types of crime, we will need more offshore patrol capability.

Building back better should include expanding the UK's maritime capacity, creating many more opportunities for UK jobs and skills. It will provide a bigger taxable base of good employment in the UK, and is also necessary for our defence. It is important not to rely on imported spares and service for naval vessels or other strategic defence equipment.

Yours ever

John