

[News story: Defence Secretary visits Appledore yard as warship competition ramps up](#)

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson paid a visit to Babcock's Appledore shipyard this morning. Crown copyright.

The Ministry of Defence announced plans to procure a new class of frigates, the Type 31e, as part of [the National Shipbuilding Strategy which was launched last year](#). The warships will be built in the UK, with a set price cap no more than £250M per frigate for the first batch of five, with an investment decision to be made at the end of this year.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Visiting a shipyard that has built hundreds of vessels and meeting some of the next generation of apprentice shipbuilders leaves me in no doubt of the current resurgence of UK shipbuilding. The South West is crucial for our military, with a particularly special connection with our Royal Navy and Royal Marines, and it's good to see Babcock seeking to strengthen that even further with this bid.

The department has received over 20 expressions of interest from industry with Babcock today announcing it will lead a bespoke team of industry partners, including Thales, BMT, Harland & Wolff and Ferguson Marine in a bid for the new Type 31e.

The MOD spent £810 per person in the South West region last year, greater than any other region in the UK coming in at a total value of £4.4bn. The department's direct spend in the area is estimated to sustain 30,000 jobs, one in every 70.

Babcock's Appledore facility has been a particularly integral link in the production of the largest ships in the Navy's history, with their production of a number of significant 'blocks' of the UK's new aircraft carriers. Separately, the Appledore yard has recently been working to deliver a new class of offshore patrol vessels for the Irish Naval Service.

The Defence Secretary was given a guided tour of the yard and visited some of the 260 staff employed there and met with the apprentices showing their enthusiasm for the potential opportunity to build cutting-edge ships for the growing Royal Navy.

The frigates will be designed to meet the needs of the Royal Navy, but also with the export market in mind. The Government will work with industry to provide support to become internationally competitive, boosting the UK

economy and jobs, while also helping to create a more stable and well-protected world.

The Defence Secretary will go on to visit the Commando Training Centre in Lympstone, Devon, which is entering its 78th year of training Royal Marines. An average of 1,300 recruits, 2,000 potential recruits and 400 potential officers attend training courses at the centre every year, and the Defence Secretary will meet many of those set to join the Corps.