

News story: Royal Navy's first new Offshore Patrol Vessel formally named

The 90-metre warship, which will be tasked with vital counter-terrorism, anti-smuggling and maritime defence duties, was named HMS Forth in honour of the famous Scottish river in a ceremony at the BAE Systems Scotstoun shipyard.

The ship will soon depart on sea trials before entering service with the Royal Navy in 2018. She is the first of a fleet of five new Batch 2 River-class OPVs being built on the Clyde which are all expected to be in service by 2021.

The work to build HMS Forth and her sister ships is sustaining around 800 Scottish jobs, as well as the critical skills required to build the Type 26 Global Combat Ships, construction of which will begin at the Govan shipyard in the summer, subject to final contract negotiations.

HMS Forth was named by the Lady Sponsor Rachel Johnstone-Burt who, in tribute to Scottish shipbuilding and in keeping with Naval tradition, broke a bottle of whisky on the bow.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin, said:

As part of a sustained programme delivering world-class ships and submarines, HMS Forth's naming is a vitally important part of the Government's ten-year £178 billion plan to provide our Armed Forces with the equipment they need.

From counter-narcotics operations in the Caribbean, to securing the UK's borders on patrols closer to home, the Royal Navy's new Offshore Patrol Vessels will help protect our interests around the world.

HMS Forth, the fifth Royal Navy vessel to bear the name over the past two centuries, is affiliated with the city of Stirling, maintaining a connection which began when the people of the city adopted a previous ship with the name Forth during the Second World War.

It is an advanced vessel equipped with a 30mm cannon and flight deck capable of accommodating a Merlin helicopter, and manned by a crew of 58 sailors. Displacing around 2,000 tonnes, she has a maximum speed of around 24 knots and can sail 5,500 nautical miles without having to resupply.

First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sir Philip Jones, said:

With the naming of HMS Forth, the Royal Navy looks forward to

another impending arrival in our future Fleet. In a few short years, these five Offshore Patrol Vessels will be busy protecting the security of UK waters and those of our overseas territories.

They are arriving in service alongside a new generation of attack submarines and Fleet tankers, and will be followed shortly by new frigates and other auxiliaries; all of this capability will coalesce around the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers. Together, they form a truly balanced Fleet, able to provide security at sea, promote international partnership, deter aggression and, when required, fight and win.

The MOD has invested £648 million in the OPV programme, and its delivery is one of the key commitments laid out in the Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015.

Chief of Materiel (Fleet) for the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation, Vice Admiral Simon Lister, said:

HMS Forth, part of the updated River class of Offshore Patrol Vessels, is one of the most advanced ships of its type and will provide the Royal Navy with the means to undertake vital operations safely and effectively.

The naming is a significant milestone in the life of HMS Forth and in the wider Offshore Patrol Vessel programme, which is well on track to deliver all five of the new ships by the end of 2019.

The Royal Navy currently operates four Batch 1 Offshore Patrol Vessels, one based in the Falkland Islands and three at HMNB Portsmouth, operating globally on tasks ranging from counter-narcotics operations to Atlantic patrols.