

News story: Small businesses behind Defence's biggest projects recognised

Small companies from every part of the UK have played a pivotal role in recent Defence projects, including building the UK's game-changing F-35 fighter jets and delivering the Royal Navy's largest ever warships, the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Small businesses across the UK are a vital cog in the Defence supply chain, from fitting warship galleys in Newcastle to building circuit boards in the South West. They bring innovation, unique expertise and a competitive edge to Defence industry.

And with startups run by former service personnel and manufacturers making the most of our veterans' unique knowledge, our nation's economy as a whole is feeling the benefit of our Armed Forces' expertise and training.

I would like to thank every small business in the country who has invested hundreds of hours of their time, their considerable skills and expertise in support of our Armed Forces.

Taking place on the first Saturday of December, Small Business Saturday celebrates the huge contribution that small businesses make to the British economy and their local communities.

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Despite the huge scale of the 65,000-tonne Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers, even some of Britain's smallest businesses have played a key role in their construction. Caterform, a family-owned business with fewer than 12 employees, worked on the galleys and server areas of the carriers that will feed a crew of 700. This Tyneside company has fitted kitchen equipment on the galleys of Royal Navy ships for over 30 years.

And over 100 British small businesses helped build the new F-35 fighter jets, who this September had their historic first landing on the deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth. Manchester-based EDM Ltd provide world-leading training simulators to help the Royal Air Force train its personnel to load weapons and fit ejection seats to its latest fighter, without ever going near a real aircraft.

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its engines, lighting, fuel and navigation systems. Overall, the F-35 programme is expected to boost the UK economy by around £35 billion and create around 25,000 British jobs.

The 90 staff of A&G Precision designed machine components for the fuselage, horizontal and vertical tails of the F-35.

Last year the Ministry of Defence invested over £2.5 billion into small and medium businesses as part of its commitment to make it easier for them to win contracts. In addition, hundreds of small businesses have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, pledging their support for the military community.

The MOD has also launched a range of initiatives, including a new Defence Supplier portal which brings together useful information and opportunities for suppliers in one place; a dedicated Twitter feed to highlight new opportunities for SMEs, @defenceproc; and new, short-form contracts for less-complex procurements.