

Finishing touches put to £30 million project to prepare Portsmouth for second aircraft carrier

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) is working with its contractor Volker Stevin to deliver crucial infrastructure worth £30-million to ensure the base's second operational berth is ready in time for the carrier, which is due to arrive by the end of this year.

One of the final pieces of the project was the installation of 2 Fendered Spacer Units (FSU). The FSUs are identical to those which were installed on the Princess Royal Jetty for HMS Queen Elizabeth, however this time they have been constructed by Portsmouth company ML (UK) Ltd, rather than being brought in from overseas.

The structures, which measure 17.6 metres by 18.7 metres, slot into the jetty and move up and down with the tide to prevent the ship's overhanging flight deck from colliding with the jetty.

The FSUs took 11 months to build and have now been put into position at Victory Jetty. They were craned from ML (UK) Ltd's yard into the water at Portsmouth Harbour, final trim checks were then carried out and the ballast weights moved to ensure the units were floating level. Finally, the units were towed to their new locations on the jetty face.

Colin Efford, DIO's Project Manager, said:

It's fantastic to see the finishing touches being put to this important project which has made improvements to the existing Victory and Sheer jetties, so they can support the 65,000-tonne new carrier. We are pleased to be working with Volker Stevin and ML(UK) and to support a local company through the supply chain.

This has been a challenging but rewarding project and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver infrastructure for such a crucial Naval asset. We are proud to be playing our part to support future Naval capability.

Martin Hobson, Managing Director of ML (UK) said:

As a local Small to Medium Enterprise, which has worked for many years within the naval base, we are delighted to have been selected to manufacture and deliver the two FSUs for the second aircraft carrier berthing facilities. We have achieved a very high-quality product which has been delivered safely and in a timely fashion. The whole team is very proud to have worked on this local project.

Robert Herbert, Project Manager at VolkerStevin, said:

This project has been fantastic to work on and I'm proud VolkerStevin has played a central role in the delivery of this nationally significant and challenging infrastructure project.

Working with local business, ML (UK) has been key to the successful installation of the FSUs and the end result is a real testament to the value of the local supply chain.

As well as providing the FSUs, the project has involved refurbishing Victory Jetty to extend its life for more than 50 years, the construction of a new mooring dolphin, the installation a Galvanic Cathodic Protection system and the provision of a second high voltage electrical system which feeds the carrier through a new hydraulic boom.

[New Women's Business Council to drive progress on closing the gender pay gap](#)

Victoria Atkins explained that by celebrating the good work of employers such as Greggs and Vodafone, she hopes that more employers will be inspired to take action to close their own pay gaps.

The new refreshed Women's Business Council – made up of business leaders – met in Westminster today.

Minister for Women, Victoria Atkins, said:

"I'm delighted that the Women's Business Council, chaired now by Fiona Dawson, is helping to encourage businesses to really grasp the potential of all the wonderful women in our country.

"One of the greatest public services an employer can do is to give people a job. Government is working with the WBC as well as businesses and employers across the country to ensure they close that gap."

New chairperson Fiona Dawson, the Global President of Mars Food, Multisales and Global Customers said:

"I'm delighted to lead the first meeting of our refreshed and revitalised Council.

"We will be supporting industries to tackle their gender pay gaps – identifying which issues will make the greatest improvement to closing their Gender Pay Gaps.

“My priority is to ensure that our partners are doing everything in their power to help women progress in the workplace.”

The meeting comes ahead of a speech set to be delivered by Minister for Women and Equalities, Amber Rudd, in which she will set out her priorities for the work of the GEO.

Earlier this year we launched #100waystoworkflexibly which details a range of different steps businesses can take to support both men and women at work including flexitime, job shares, remote working and annualised hours.

One such company is Greggs who have supported their employees through offering flexitime, part time work and job shares to fit around family needs.

Further information:

Since its inception in 2012, the WBC has been instrumental in creating a strong and enduring relationship between government and business. Cornerstones of their work include initiatives to help with the cost of childcare, offer more flexibility in the workplace, and encourage women to start up their own businesses.

In this new and exciting stage for the Council, its work continues to evolve. As new members join, they lend their expertise shaping the WBC's direction and helping it to reduce the gender pay gap and ensure equality at work for all.

[Polish-British economic relations: an exceptional, enduring relationship](#)

PLN 15b were added to Poland's GDP in 2017 thanks to foreign direct investment from the UK, according to a new report by Deloitte, launched during the Economic Forum in Krynica. The report, titled “Polish-British economic relations: an exceptional, enduring relationship”, reveals also that British companies operating in Poland employ almost 115 thousand people.

Irena Pichola, leader of the team for sustainable development in Poland and Central Europe at Deloitte, said upon launching the report:

British entrepreneurs constitute a significant percentage of those investing in Poland. This means that UK companies that helped create the private sector in Poland back in the 1990s support its growth today, thus also the innovativeness of our economy.

Exports, imports, services

In Q1 2019, the UK's share in Poland's exports stood at 6.6 percent – second only to Germany (27 percent).

Rafał Rudzki, director and adviser for sustainable development at Deloitte, said:

Even though Poland and the UK are separated by a significant geographical distance, matters relating to imports and exports have brought both countries closer together regularly for 30 years. The value of Polish exports to the UK totalled less than USD 1b in 1995, but as many as 16.6b in 2018, the increase applying to all key product categories – from electronics and machines to chemicals and metals, to minerals, textiles and foods. The last category can actually boast the most spectacular, twentyfold increase.

UK exports to Poland have also increased during this timeframe – from around USD 1.5b in 1995 to 6.5b in 2018. Topping the list are chemical products (25 percent of all exports) and machines (19 percent), including office equipment and computers. After Germany and Switzerland, the UK is also an important recipient of services from Poland (7.3 percent), and it is the second largest exporter of services to Poland (8.4 percent).

British Ambassador to Poland, Jonathan Knott, said:

Despite the changing international environment, relations between Poland and Great Britain can be described as an exceptional and enduring partnership. The last century, particularly the period after the fall of communism, saw the flourish of our trade relations the fast development of which benefits both countries. The best proof of expanding bilateral economic cooperation is the fast-growing trade exchange that increased more than fivefold in the years 1995-2018.

Antoni Reczek, Chairman of the British Polish Chamber of Commerce, said:

Poland is perceived positively considering the size of its economy and its strengthening integration with the global economy and the EU's market, and also in view of the availability of domestic providers of goods and services. I'm very glad that companies with British capital plan further expansion in the Polish market: statistically, 3 in 4 companies want to increase employment and investment expenditure. I'm optimistic about the future of British companies in Poland.

Potential for further cooperation – sustainable development

Operational and investment activities of British companies also help implementing the principles of sustainable development. Climate change, pollution, responsible production and consumption, clean energy, reduction of poverty and equalisation of chances are only some areas that call for countries sharing their expertise and best practices.

One of numerous promising areas to exchange experience is energy transformation, particularly offshore wind energy, whose potential in Poland is put at 10.3 GW. The UK is Europe's largest producer of offshore wind energy (8 GW annually) and it plans to generate even 30 GW using this method by 2030. Other upcoming areas include electromobility, modern transport infrastructure and broadly perceived digital technologies.

Student Loans Company calls on students to prepare for payment



During September approximately 1.25M students across the UK will receive Maintenance Loans from the Student Loans Company – supporting them to access opportunities in higher and further education.

With the new academic year set to start, SLC is urging students to get ready for the first payment by following its top tips:

- Complete your online application – it sounds obvious but some students, especially those who have gone through clearing, may not have applied for funding yet and should make sure they do this as soon as possible. The easiest way to apply is online at www.gov.uk/studentfinance.
- Register at your college or university – payments are made to students on the first official day of their course, but only if their attendance on their course has been registered, Students should follow the registration guidance provided by their university or college. It can

take up to three days for payments to reach a student's account so they should also make sure they have money to cover initial costs, such as books, transport or their first month's rent.

- Make sure you have provided up-to-date bank details – often when a student goes to college or university they open a new bank account. It's important that they update their online student finance account with the new details to ensure their money goes to the right place.
- Provide any evidence you have been asked for as soon as possible – parents and partners may also be asked to provide financial information and evidence. They should do this through their own online account which they can set up on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).
- Follow Student Finance England's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) channels – look out for details of our Facebook Live sessions which give students the opportunity to put their questions to our team of student finance experts.

SLC's Executive Director of Operations, Derek Ross said:

“The team at SLC will be working hard over the next month to ensure that students receive their funding at the start of term. Students can help ensure the process is as smooth as possible by following our advice. There is lots of information available on our [payment page](#) and on our social media channels to help students and their parents get prepared.”

The National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA) added:

“We here at NASMA know what an exciting time this is for new students starting on the next stage of their educational journey. You'll be meeting new friends and getting involved in lots of new interests and projects so the last thing you'll want is money worries. We can only support our friends at SLC when they say how important it is to get your finances sorted out as soon as possible. That way you'll be able to budget effectively for the year and enjoy all of what is going on around you without having to worry too much about money!”

For further information contact:

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Daily grind foiled at Chapelcross Site

The packets – which use technology designed to keep the coffee aroma locked in – mean nuclear workers can safely seal radioactively contaminated waste into bags so it can be more easily and safely handled.

The idea was brewed by experts at the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy in Oxfordshire, and is now being trialled during work to dismantle Chapelcross' former processing plant that had become contaminated with radioactive tritium as a historical legacy of its operations.

Minister for Nuclear Nadhim Zahawi praised Chapelcross and Culham staff, saying:

I am so impressed by the imagination of staff at Scotland's first nuclear power station: taking inspiration from something as simple as a cup of coffee to help the UK remain at the cutting-edge of decommissioning – an industry which supports highly skilled jobs and regional economic growth.

The JET bag, named after Culham's Joint European Torus experimental fusion reactor, can be made to measure and sealed, preventing the tritium from leaking.

Workers at Scotland's first nuclear power station still have to wear protective suits and breathing equipment when closing-up the bags of contaminated waste, but once sealed they can be handled by workers who no longer need breathing equipment to handle them safely.

Chapelcross' Greg Wotherspoon said:

We saw the team at Culham using the bags and thought it could work for us. You can cut the foil to any size you want and seal them using heat tongs and, just like a coffee bag, you get a really good seal.

Greg's team carried out a series of trials on a variety of contaminated wastes such as: gloves, wet cleaning wipes, rags and solvent. These were sealed and monitored over weeks and months, to test the performance of the bags.

Dave Coombs, Waste Management Group Leader for UKAEA (which owns and runs the Culham Centre), said there was a long-standing relationship with Magnox to share learning, training and good practice.

We took the inspiration from coffee roasters who use foil bags to

keep the beans fresh, but we make the foil bags ourselves now. The team from Chapelcross saw how to cut and make the packages, seal it using the heat tongs and then test it. They 'instantly' saw how it could work for them.

So far the bags have been used for single items at Chapelcross. The next step will be to test the package on a 'blend' of contaminated waste.