

# News story: Royal Marines to be restructured in line with growing Royal Navy

With billions being invested into a growing Royal Navy, the Royal Marines have decided to restructure to better balance skills across the force.

The move comes as part of the Navy's regular review of its structure to ensure that it suits the operational demands of the 21st century, and is appropriately balanced for the future with 400 more personnel, more ships, new aircraft carriers and submarines entering front line service.

Around half of the 200 roles being repurposed are backroom function roles, like drivers and administrative staff. Freeing these up to be carried out by Reservists and civilians will enable skills to be used more appropriately across the Navy.

The other half of the restructure comes as part of plans developed by 3 Commando Brigade, who are responsible for the deployment of the Marines, who decided it would be beneficial to the Corps to make 42 Commando a specialised Maritime Operations unit.

A Royal Marines Commando performs roles ranging from maritime operations like countering piracy and protecting our trade routes across the globe, to land-based operations like warfighting and peace-keeping. Under this re-balancing, 42 Commando will become the specialised, go-to unit for maritime operations – meaning some of their posts, like heavy weapons specialists, can be reallocated across the Navy.

No Royal Marines will be made redundant as a result of today's news – when those in the roles which have been identified for repurposing leave, their position will simply transfer to a different area of the Navy.

The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Philip Jones, said:

As someone who has worked with Royal Marines at every stage of my career, most notably when commanding the Amphibious Task Group from RM Stonehouse, I know how vital their role is as the UK's premier high readiness contingency force. However, as First Sea Lord, I also know we must adapt to meet the challenges of a dangerous and uncertain world.

The Government is investing in a new generation of ships, submarines and aircraft. As we introduce these capabilities into Service, we must ensure we have the right mix of skills across each of the Navy's Fighting Arms to optimise how we use them, and the Commandant General and I have sought to find the right balance between sailors and marines in responding to this challenge.

The Royal Marines remain bound in to every part of the Royal Navy's future, from conducting sophisticated operations from the sea, at a variety of scales and against a range of threats, using our new aircraft carriers as a base, to leading the Service's development of information warfare. They will continue to be as vital to the Defence of the Realm in the years ahead as they have been for the past 350.

Commandant General Royal Marines, Major Robert Magowan, said:

As Royal Marines, we pride ourselves in being the first to understand, the first to adapt and the first to overcome. So as we confront a changing and unstable security environment, we are defining an exciting future for our Corps, which will ensure that we remain as relevant tomorrow as we do today.

With a £178 billion equipment plan backed by a rising defence budget, this year sees the first of two giant 65,000-tonne Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers arrive in Portsmouth, the first of the Navy's five next generation patrol ships begin her sea trials and the fourth Astute Class submarine enter the water.

A computer generated image (CGI) of one of the two new Royal Navy aircraft carriers. Crown Copyright.

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## [News story: Baroness Anelay comments on Amnesty's Death Penalty report](#)

It is encouraging that there was a reported decrease in the number of executions in 2016. I welcome the fact that compared with the previous year, fewer countries imposed death sentences and carried out executions. The Government's opposition to the death penalty is clear; we condemn it in all circumstances.

It is concerning that Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have reportedly carried out 87% of the world's executions. It is also deeply troubling that the report indicates that China continues to execute in the thousands. I urge those countries – and all countries that continue to impose the death penalty – to reconsider its use and to acknowledge its ineffectiveness as a deterrent and its inhumanity.

The global trajectory is towards abolition, with countries that retain the death penalty becoming an increasingly isolated minority. The UK supports

this trend and is funding projects in a wide range of countries to promote abolition. UK Ministers and diplomats raise our objection to the death penalty and support for reform at every appropriate opportunity. The UK will continue to support the UN global moratorium on use of the death penalty as a first step towards ultimate abolition.

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## [Press release: UK House Price Index \(HPI\) for February 2017](#)

The February data shows an annual price increase of 5.8% which takes the average property value in the UK to £217,502. Monthly house prices have risen by 0.6% since January 2017. The monthly index figure for the UK was 114.1.

In England, the February data shows an annual price increase of 6.3% which takes the average property value to £234,466. Monthly house prices have risen by 0.8% since January 2017.

Wales shows an annual price increase of 1.8% which takes the average property value to £145,293. Monthly house prices have fallen by 0.9% since January 2017.

London shows an annual price increase of 3.7% which takes the average property value to £474,704. Monthly house prices have fallen by 0.9% since January 2017.

The UK [Property Transaction statistics](#) showed that in February 2017 the total number of seasonally adjusted property transactions completed in the UK with value of £40,000 or above decreased by 1.9% compared with February 2016. See [the economic statement](#).

Sales during December 2016, the most up-to-date HM Land Registry figures available, show that:

1. The UK House Price Index (HPI) is published on the second or third Tuesday of each month with Northern Ireland figures updated quarterly. The March 2017 UK HPI will be published at 9.30am on 16 May 2017. A [calendar of release dates](#) is available.
2. Data for the UK HPI is provided by HM Land Registry, Registers of Scotland, Land & Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and the Valuation Office Agency.
3. The UK HPI is calculated by the Office for National Statistics and Land &

Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. It applies a hedonic regression model that uses the various sources of data on property price, in particular HM Land Registry's Price Paid Dataset, and attributes to produce estimates of the change in house prices each month. Find out more about the methodology used from [ONS](#) and [Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency](#).

4. The first estimate for new build average price (April 2016 report) was based on a small sample which can cause volatility. A three month moving average has been applied to the latest estimate to remove some of this volatility.
5. Work has been taking place since 2014 to develop a single, official HPI that reflects the final transaction price for sales of residential property in the UK. Using the geometric mean, it covers purchases at market value for owner-occupation and buy-to-let, excluding those purchases not at market value (such as re-mortgages), where the 'price' represents a valuation.
6. Information on residential property transactions for England and Wales, collected as part of the official registration process, is provided by HM Land Registry for properties that are sold for full market value.
7. The HM Land Registry dataset contains the sale price of the property, the date when the sale was completed, full address details, the type of property (detached, semi-detached, terraced or flat), if it is a newly built property or an established residential building and a variable to indicate if the property has been purchased as a financed transaction (using a mortgage) or as a non-financed transaction (cash purchase).
8. Repossession data is based on the number of transactions lodged with HM Land Registry by lenders exercising their power of sale.
9. For England this is shown as volumes of repossessions recorded by Government Office Region. For Wales there is a headline figure for the number of repossessions recorded in Wales.
10. The data can be downloaded as a .csv file. Repossession data prior to April 2016 is not available. Find out more information about [repossessions](#).
11. Background tables of the raw and cleansed aggregated data, in Excel and CSV formats, are also published monthly although Northern Ireland is on a quarterly basis. They are available for free use and re-use under the Open Government Licence.
12. As a government department established in 1862, executive agency and trading fund responsible to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and

Industrial Strategy, HM Land Registry keeps and maintains the Land Register for England and Wales. The Land Register has been open to public inspection since 1990.

13. With the largest transactional database of its kind detailing more than 24 million titles, HM Land Registry underpins the economy by safeguarding ownership of many billions of pounds worth of property.
14. For further information about HM Land Registry visit [www.gov.uk/land-registry](http://www.gov.uk/land-registry).
15. Follow us on Twitter [@LandRegGov](https://twitter.com/LandRegGov), our [blog](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

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## [News story: New market-leading bond launches today](#)

This new product gives people access to a market-leading rate of 2.2% for between £100 and £3000 of their savings.

In a move to support savers who have been affected by low interest rates, the Chancellor announced the market-leading product at [Autumn Statement 2016](#). The rate of 2.2%, fixed for three years, was confirmed at last month's Budget.

Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Simon Kirby said:

From raising the ISA threshold to introducing the new Lifetime ISA, this government is committed to creating a nation of savers.

With its market-leading rate of 2.2%, the investment bond will provide a valuable boost for savers who have been affected by low interest rates.

With the average 3 year fixed term product having a rate of 1.24%, the new offering is significantly higher than others currently on the market.

In the decade before 2009, the average 1-year fixed term savings rate was 5.0%. But since then the average has been 1.9%, and is currently 0.6%.

The product is provided by [NS&I](#), one of the largest savings organisations in the UK with 25 million customers, and is available to those aged 16 and over.

It can only be purchased online to give customers a simple way to apply for

the bond and to manage their investment. This also reflects the changing nature of customer behaviour as more money is deposited online with NS&I than via any other individual sales channels.

The new [NS&I product](#) comes on top of other actions the government has taken to support savers, including increasing the ISA allowance to £20,000, introducing a new personal savings allowance that means that 98% of adults pay no savings tax and launching the Lifetime ISA to help younger people buy their first home and save for later in life.

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## [News story: CMA accepts Mastercard/VocaLink undertakings](#)

The CMA has today accepted undertakings offered by Mastercard to address competition concerns arising from its purchase of VocaLink.

On 18 January 2017, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) [announced it would look in detail](#) at whether the undertakings offered by Mastercard UK Holdco Limited, an affiliate of MasterCard International Incorporated (Mastercard), and VocaLink Holdings Ltd (VocaLink) removed the need to carry out an in-depth merger investigation.

The package of measures offered by Mastercard and VocaLink consisted of:

- VocaLink making its existing network connectivity available to a new supplier of infrastructure services to LINK. This could allow a competitor to use VocaLink's connectivity to members of the LINK ATM network, rather than having to build their own;
- VocaLink transferring to LINK the intellectual property rights relating to the LINK LIS5 messaging standard, which members of the network use to communicate when customers use cash machines; and
- Mastercard contributing to the cost to LINK members of changing to a new supplier of infrastructure services to LINK.

After considering responses to a [formal consultation](#), the CMA has concluded the proposals are sufficient to address its competition concerns.

The undertakings and all other information relating to this merger investigation will shortly be available on the [case page](#).