

Speech: First Sea Lord speech for HMS Prince of Wales naming

Your Royal Highnesses, my Lords, ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, 3 years ago, the naming of HMS Queen Elizabeth was a strategic awakening for the United Kingdom.

The moment when we proved to the world, and to ourselves, that we still have what it takes to be a great maritime industrial nation.

Today, we return to Rosyth, to the cradle of modern British sea power, to dedicate HMS Prince of Wales.

We are honoured by the presence of Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall; of course, as we are in Scotland, more appropriately the Duke and Duchess of Rothesay.

We are also joined by representatives from across government, the armed forces, together with veterans and some of our vital international partners.

This ceremony, and all that it represents, demonstrates the United Kingdom's determination to see through our strategic intent and to fulfil the promise of our maritime renaissance.

For though she is the second of her class, HMS Prince of Wales has a strategic significance all of her own.

If building one carrier is a statement of national ambition; then building 2 is an unmistakable sign of commitment, to our own defence and that of our allies.

Atlantic Charter

Today, HMS Prince of Wales is the newest and most advanced vessel of her kind.

In the half century of service that lies before her, she will assimilate astonishing developments in technology, from unmanned vehicles on the seas and in the skies, to the all encompassing, all pervading, tide of data that is shaping modern warfare.

And yet the name Prince of Wales is a historic one. It is emblematic of many centuries of loyal service to crown and country.

Of the many ships that have borne this princely title, none better demonstrates the importance of our continuing strategic responsibility than the seventh and last.

In the darkest period of the Second World War, the battleship HMS Prince of Wales was the venue for Winston Churchill's first meeting with President

Roosevelt.

During a church service off the coast of Newfoundland, the 2 leaders sat beneath her great guns, amid a congregation of sailors and marines from both nations.

Until that point Britain had stood alone. But on that Sunday morning, onboard that ship, the New World joined the Old in common cause.

Of all the many legacies borne out of that extraordinary partnership, few have been more significant than the Atlantic Charter.

It pledged economic and social progress for the benefit of all. At its heart was a commitment to self determination, freedom of the seas and the rule of law in the world.

This settlement was the inspiration for the United Nations and has been the basis of security and progress in the world since 1945.

It is a settlement under which our own nation has enjoyed 7 decades of comparative peace and rising prosperity.

But today the principles upon which it is founded are being tested.

From the Baltic to the Black Sea, hybrid warfare seeks to undermine democratic governments and sovereign borders.

In the Mediterranean, a sorry tide of human suffering has exposed once again the inequality borne out of conflict and repression.

And in the South China Sea, growing regional competition highlights the continuing importance of freedom of navigation to global stability and prosperity.

The United Kingdom holds positions of international responsibility: other countries look to us for leadership, partnership and example.

So the biggest test of all comes from within.

Do we still have the necessary belief to stand by the principles under which we have prospered?

Are we still prepared to do what it takes to defend them and to lead others in doing the same?

And, most importantly, are we prepared to match our words with the tools to do the job?

Modernised Royal Navy

Today we are gathered in this great dockyard to answer those questions.

Standing in the shadow of a new Prince of Wales, and in the company of our most important allies, we rededicate ourselves to this historic cause, and to

the obligations it brings.

With 2 Queen Elizabeth class carriers in Royal Navy service, one will be available for operations at all times.

In the United States, aviators from the Fleet Air Arm are working hand-in-glove with their Royal Air Force counterparts to bring the F35B Joint Strike Fighter into UK service, and the first operational squadron moves to Marham next year.

This combination of ships and jets will provide our nation with a continuous carrier strike capability, a powerful conventional deterrent in a dangerous and uncertain world.

Alongside this new undertaking, the Royal Navy will deliver the UK's nuclear deterrent, as we have done every hour of every day for nearly half a century.

These 2 strategic responsibilities will sit at the heart of a modernised and emboldened Royal Navy.

On the River Clyde, steel has been cut for the first city-class frigate, HMS Glasgow. She and her sister ships will carry names from all parts of our United Kingdom, renewing the bond between the nation and its navy.

Meanwhile, after the long years in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Royal Marines have returned to sea, and to the environment in which they have demonstrated such unswerving professionalism and adaptability across 3 and a half centuries.

And finally, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary will continue to be found where they've always been in times of peace and war: right by our side.

But this is not a journey our sailors and marines make by themselves.

Working with the Army and the Royal Air Force, the UK Carrier Strike Group will project British power and influence at sea, in the air, over the land and in cyberspace.

And working with our international partners, it represents a new and substantial commitment to NATO and to all the UK's alliances throughout the world.

We could not have reached this point without the substantial and ongoing support of the United States Navy, the US Marine Corps and the Marine Nationale, and I pay grateful tribute to them today.

We will repay the military and political capital they have invested in us by delivering a comprehensive, credible capability that opens the way for closer carrier cooperation between us.

So the advent of the Queen Elizabeth class carriers truly represents the start of a new era of strategic responsibility for the Royal Navy and the nation.

Conclusion

In drawing to a close, I would like to pay tribute to all those who have dedicated their efforts to this great national endeavour.

In the few short months since she put to sea, HMS Queen Elizabeth has become an icon of British engineering and British innovation, and it was a joyous occasion to welcome her into her home port of Portsmouth just over 3 weeks ago.

The same will be true for HMS Prince of Wales. Wherever she travels, at home or overseas, she will draw crowds to the water's edge where they will marvel at your achievement.

Alone, either one of these vessels would be a formidable expression of military might. But together, HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales send a powerful message to friend and foe alike.

We may live in uncertain times, but the United Kingdom has lost none of its famous resolve. We will protect our interests, we will support our allies, and we will shoulder our responsibilities, wherever in the world they are at stake.

As I consider all that has been accomplished, and that which is yet to come, I am drawn to the words of the poet Longfellow, sent by Roosevelt to Churchill after their historic meeting onboard the last Prince of Wales 76 years ago, words that find new meaning in the vessel before us, and the responsibilities that await the young men and women who will take her to sea:

Sail on, O Ship of State!

Sail on, O Union strong and great!

Humanity with all its fears,

With all the hopes of future years,

Is hanging breathless on thy fate!

[News story: Britain's second aircraft carrier named in Rosyth](#)

The ship's new sponsor, Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Rothesay, followed Royal Navy tradition by triggering a bottle of 10 year old whisky from the Laphroaig distillery in the Isle of Islay, smashing it against the ship's hull.

This significant milestone comes just three weeks after the first aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth made her first entry into her home port of Portsmouth as part of her maiden sea trials programme.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon, said:

HMS Prince of Wales is a prestigious name for what I'm sure will be a most prestigious ship. Today is yet another landmark in an incredibly busy year for the Royal Navy and shipbuilding. HMS Queen Elizabeth has undergone her sea trials and arrived into Portsmouth, I have cut the steel on the new Type 26 frigates and we announced our ambitious new National Shipbuilding Strategy this week.

Together these magnificent carriers will act as our statement to the world. By having two we will ensure the UK will be one of the few nations able to maintain a continuous carrier strike presence on the high seas to project our power across the world.

The ship will be the eighth in the Royal Navy to bear the name HMS Prince of Wales, honouring Britain's history as a seafaring nation from the Sixth Rate gun ship in 1693 to the 'King George V' Class Battleship that fought in World War II.

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

The name HMS Prince of Wales represents many centuries of loyal service to Crown and Country, and its return to the Royal Navy today is a moment of great strategic significance for the United Kingdom. To build one carrier is a symbol of national ambition – but to build two is a sign of real commitment to our own security and to our international responsibilities.

With two Queen Elizabeth-class carriers in Royal Navy service, one will be available for operations at all times. When paired with the F35B Joint Strike Fighter, they will provide our nation with a continuous Carrier Strike capability – a powerful conventional deterrent in a dangerous and uncertain world. I congratulate all those who have worked so hard over many years to make the Royal Navy's carrier-led renaissance a reality.

Sir Simon Lister, Managing Director of the Aircraft Carrier Alliance, said:

Today's naming ceremony is a significant moment in the life of the programme and for each and every person involved in the design and construction of HMS PRINCE OF WALES, one of the largest engineering projects in the UK today. The Nation has come together to build this magnificent ship which will in turn protect our Nation's interests around the globe.

HMS Prince of Wales, along with her sister ship, HMS Queen Elizabeth, reflects the very best of British design and engineering capability and has created a once in a lifetime opportunity for highly skilled employees to be involved in an iconic programme.

I am immensely proud to welcome The Royal Highnesses and our many other distinguished guests to Rosyth today.

With a crew of 679, HMS Prince of Wales is expected to carry out sea trials in 2019 before entering Royal Navy service.

There are also currently 150 Royal Navy and RAF personnel continuing F-35 aircraft training in the United States. By the end of this year it is planned that the UK will have 14 of these fast jets, the World's most sophisticated fighter, with initial flight trials from the deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth planned for 2018. With a crew of 679 HMS Prince of Wales is expected to carry out sea trials in 2019 before entering Royal Navy service.

Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

The HMS Prince of Wales will do more than keep us safe and project British power across the globe. With home grown talent providing 90% of the suppliers for her and her sister ship, this aircraft carrier will also promote the strength of our shipbuilding sector.

This achievement shows what a huge amount of exporting potential the sector has and, as an international economic department, we will continue to support businesses to export their goods and services, and attract the investment that creates and supports British jobs.

[Speech: Prince of Wales Naming Ceremony](#)

My Lords, Ladies, Gentlemen, Allies, and Friends,

It's been a great year for our first carrier Queen Elizabeth, following her sea trials and Portsmouth docking.

But tonight we shine spotlight on her soon-to-be named twin: HMS Prince of Wales.

A name with a rich heritage.

Through the eventful life of the Prince of Wales's seven predecessors you'll find our nation's naval life captured in miniature.

Between them those ships successfully defended St Lucia from superior forces in 1778, scuppered Napoleon's invasion plans in 1805 and supported the Allied landings in the Dardanelles in 1915.

The last Prince of Wales forced the Bismarck away from Allied convoy routes in 1941 and carried Winston Churchill to the historic Atlantic Charter meeting with President Roosevelt.

A ship of war and peace.

Her commanding officer was Captain John Leach. His granddaughter Henrietta Wood is here tonight.

Our newest carrier name also recalls his Royal Highness. A former Royal Navy Commander who once operated off the Carrier HMS Hermes.

Prince and carrier share the same motto: "Ich dein"... "I serve".

No vessel is better equipped to do so.

Like its sister ship HMS Prince of Wales will travel at speeds of more than 25 knots, range in excess of 7000 nautical miles and, despite dwarfing the earlier Invincible class, operate with a smaller crew.

What a testament to the magnificent skills of British industry.

So let me thank all those, many here tonight, for making it a reality.

From the banks of the Clyde to the shores of the River Torridge this has been a truly national enterprise: six UK shipyards, 700 companies, 11,000 experts, and a vast supply chain spending millions of hours manufacturing millions of parts.

All of you involved in the most complex UK engineering projects ever undertaken can take huge pride and will get your reward when this spectacular showcase of British ingenuity, imagination and innovation sails the seven seas.

And let's remind ourselves why these formidable fortresses matter more than ever.

PROJECT POWER

First, in a darker world of intensifying global dangers our carriers, two of them, give the UK unique ability to project power.

Nine acres of floating sovereign territory allowing the UK to dictate the terms at a time and manner of our choosing at sea, in the air, over land, and

in cyberspace.

We won't need permission or approval from others, we can simply sail our carriers to the hotspot, anywhere in the world.

And with one carrier always available at very high readiness, we can respond any time.

Meanwhile, from their decks, Lightning fighters will fly: a match for just about anything in the sky marking a new era of Royal Navy and Royal Air Force co-operation.

Helicopters too will disembark ground and Special Forces into the danger zone.

For proof of the difference a carrier makes ask Henrietta Wood again.

Her father, Admiral Sir Henry Leach, as First Sea Lord, famously persuaded the Iron Lady that a carrier force could recover the Falklands: and it did.

VERSATILITY TO COMBAT MODERN THREATS

Carriers don't just conduct high-end warfighting at scale.

Second, they provide unprecedented versatility to counter the unconventional threats of the modern world.

We couldn't have dealt with Daesh terror in Iraq and Syria without air strikes from the US and French carriers.

Even in land-locked Afghanistan, coalition air support came from US aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf.

Now the UK too will have the cutting edge to strike the fanatics wherever they lurk.

Critically, carriers combine hard power with smart and soft, giving us greater ability to provide mobile command and control, situational awareness and analysis, even while distributing vital humanitarian help.

CERTAINTY TO FACE UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Third, our carriers give us more certainty to face an uncertain future.

Whatever lurks around the corner, they give the next generations, 40, 50 years ahead: unmatched political and military choice from the strategic to the tactical.

And they are built to last.

Since our nation embarked on this project we've had four prime ministers, five general elections, and nine Defence Secretaries.

So these flagships will still be sailing in the 2040s, 50s and 60s.

Any future adversary daring to square up to Britain will confront a nation with both a strategic nuclear and conventional deterrent.

WHAT'S TO COME

We have 11 F-35s already with 120 pilots and aircrew training alongside our partners in the US.

By the year's end we'll have 14 F35B with the first squadron due to arrive in RAF Marham next summer.

In autumn 2018 we'll welcome the first Lightning on board QE for flight trials.

By 2019 we'll conduct further trials on HMS Queen Elizabeth with more aircraft, and a comprehensive carrier strike group in tow.

By 2021, F35B Joint Strike Fighters from the US Marine Corps will fly side-by-side alongside ours.

And by 2023, the UK will have 24 F35B Joint Strike Fighters available to embark on our carriers.

SYMBOL OF GLOBAL AMBITION

So our nation's wooden walls are now wrought of steel.

And the case for carrier is iron clad.

Our carriers' significance goes beyond the ships.

They now symbolize our global ambition.

They are Britain's statement to the world.

An investment in strategic maritime power that shows us rising up to the challenge of the time.

Strengthening our ability to work with allies around the world or to alone when we need.

Our ambition doesn't end there. These two carriers front up our growing navy.

We're regenerating our fleet.

Since I became Secretary of State three years ago, I have presided over the steel cut, naming or launching of 20 ships and submarines, from the aircraft carriers, to our frigates, offshore patrol vessels and submarines.

In the last 12 months alone, we have laid the keel of the first Dreadnought, floated out Audacious our fourth Astute submarine, named HMS Forth the first of our five new OPVs, welcomed the arrival of Tidespring – the first of our four new RFA tankers, and cut steel cut on Type 26, the first of our 8 new Anti-Submarine Warfare frigates.

Earlier today I launched a programme to build the first batch of five General Purpose Frigates as part of our National Shipbuilding Strategy, providing for more and better ships, a more modern, efficient and productive maritime sector that can boost our national prosperity across the UK.

And we've just launched a programme to build a new lighter, exportable General Purpose Frigate.

So 2017 is more than the Year of the Royal Navy.

It's a renaissance of British sea power.

CONCLUSION

So, like thousands who recently flocked to the water's edge in Portsmouth, let's take proper pride in our newest national nautical icons.

We're a maritime nation with the sea in our blood.

Throughout our history we've built great ships to great sailors like Anson, Hood, Jervis, Nelson, and Jellicoe; and they made Britain great.

Now Carriers Captains Steve Moorhouse and Jerry Kyd, at the helm of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Queen Elizabeth, will follow in their wake and once more steer Britain to greatness.

[Press release: Update from Priti Patel on the UK's response to Hurricane Irma](#)

Updating on the UK's response to Hurricane Irma, International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

When crisis hits, it is right that the world looks to Britain for its leadership and the UK has already provided lifesaving support.

The UK has already sent emergency UK aid relief supplies including 200 shelter kits, each able to support a family of five, providing immediate relief to 1,000 people who have lost their homes.

I have sent world leading humanitarian experts to the region who are working with the British Red Cross to urgently assess need and ensure that the UK's help reaches those whose lives have been torn apart by the destruction wrought by Hurricane Irma.

Background

- The most powerful hurricane ever to hit the Atlantic has devastated buildings and infrastructure – and worse, it has done irreparable damage to families and communities. Several have lost loved ones, and some in the region are missing.
- The UK Government has announced extra emergency support to provide assistance to those affected by the deadly Hurricane Irma, the most powerful of its kind ever recorded.
- RFA Mounts Bay, which has 40 Royal Marines and Army Engineers on board, and her personnel are on site helping local authorities to restore vital support such as clean water, sanitation, temporary shelter and if required, medical assistance
- The ship houses equipment to move earth or debris, repair infrastructure to provide clean water and transport water Equipped with boats and helicopters to access affected islands, the ship also carries emergency relief supplies.
- A task force has been sent to the region, and over the next 24 hours troops and engineers will deploy with helicopters to support the relief effort. We have also sent a command headquarters to co-ordinate our efforts.
- With the danger posed by Hurricane Jose which will hit areas already affected by the storms we are diverting a second ship to the Caribbean, our flagship HMS Ocean, to bring the help that will be needed in reconstruction after the hurricanes have passed.
- Today's support can also be used to charter flights to deliver additional aid supplies into the region, or heavy machinery if needed.
- Three humanitarian experts were sent to the region ahead of Hurricane Irma to assess needs on the ground and help prepare for the disaster.
- A fourth adviser has also been sent and will arrive later today to provide vital expertise to help co-ordinate the response.
- MapAction, a British charity funded by UK aid, has sent a two person Disaster Mapping Team to the Caribbean to support mapping and information management for partners on the ground.

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[Speech: First Sea Lord outlines the Royal Navy's requirements for the Type 31e frigate](#)

Minister, ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure to speak to you today, in the midst of a hugely exciting few weeks for the Royal Navy and the UK's maritime industrial sector.

As the minister mentioned, when HMS Queen Elizabeth arrived in Portsmouth last month, I described it as a triumph of strategic ambition and a lesson for the future, and I really meant it.

Here was a project first initiated 20 years ago, in which time it outlasted 3 prime ministers, 8 defence secretaries and 7 First Sea Lords. It survived 5 general elections, 3 defence reviews and more planning rounds than I care to remember.

But despite all these twists and turns, the project endured and, in doing so proved to the world, and to ourselves, that we still have what it takes to be a great maritime industrial nation.

Now, in the [National Shipbuilding Strategy](#), we have an opportunity to maintain the momentum.

So my reason for being here today is two-fold. Firstly, to outline the Royal Navy's requirement for the Type 31e by describing the kind of ship we're looking for and it's place in our future fleet.

Secondly, to emphasise our commitment to working with you, our industry partners, to build on what we've achieved with the Queen Elizabeth class, and to bring about a stronger and more dynamic shipbuilding sector which can continue to prosper and grow in the years ahead.

Requirement

The Royal Navy's requirement for a general purpose frigate is, in the first instance, driven by the government's commitment to maintain our current force of 19 frigates and destroyers.

The 6 Type 45 destroyers are still new in service, but our 13 Type 23 frigates are already serving beyond their original design life.

They remain capable, but to extend their lives any further is no longer viable from either an economic or an operational perspective.

Eight of those Type 23s are specifically equipped for anti-submarine warfare and these will be replaced on a one-for-one basis by the new Type 26 frigate.

As such, we look to the Type 31e to replace the remaining 5 remaining general purpose variants.

This immediately gives you an idea of both the urgency with which we view this project, and how it fits within our future fleet.

In order to continue meeting our current commitments, we need the Type 31e to fulfil routine tasks to free up the more complex Type 45 destroyers and Type 26 frigates for their specialist combat roles in support of the strategic nuclear deterrent and as part of the carrier strike group.

So although capable of handling itself in a fight, the Type 31e will be geared toward maritime security and defence engagement, including the fleet ready escort role at home, our fixed tasks in the South Atlantic, the Caribbean and the Gulf, and our NATO commitments.

These missions shape our requirements.

There is more detail in your handout but, broadly speaking, the Type 31e will need a hanger and flight deck for both a small helicopter and unmanned air vehicle, accommodation to augment the ship's company with a variety of mission specialists as required, together with stowage for sea boats, disaster relief stores and other specialist equipment.

It will be operated by a core ships company of between 80-100 men and women and it needs to be sufficiently flexible to incorporate future developments in technology, including unmanned systems and novel weaponry as they come to the fore, so open architecture and modularity are a must.

All this points towards a credible, versatile frigate, capable of independent and sustained global operations.

Now I want to be absolutely clear about what constitutes a frigate in the eyes of the Royal Navy.

In Nelson's time, a first rate ship like HMS Victory was a relative scarcity compared with smaller, more lightly armed frigates.

They wouldn't take their place in the line of battle, but they were fast, manoeuvrable and flew the White Ensign in many of the far flung corners of the world where the UK had vital interests.

More recently, the navy I joined still had general purpose frigates like the Leander, Rothesay and Tribal class and, later, the Type 21s, which picked up many of the routine patrol tasks and allowed the specialist ASW frigates to focus on their core NATO role.

It was only when defence reductions at the end of the Cold War brought difficult choices that we moved to an all high end force.

So forgive the history lesson, but the point I'm making is the advent of a mixed force of Type 31 and Type 26 frigates is not a new departure for the Royal Navy, nor is it a 'race to the bottom'; rather it marks a return to the concept of a balanced fleet.

And the Type 31e is not going to be a glorified patrol vessel or a cut price corvette. It's going to be, as it needs to be, a credible frigate that reflects the time honoured standards and traditions of the Royal Navy.

Ambition

In order to maintain our current force levels, the first Type 31e must enter service as the as the first general purpose Type 23, HMS Argyll, leaves service in 2023.

Clearly that's a demanding timescale, which means the development stage must be undertaken more quickly than for any comparable ship since the Second World War.

But while this programme may be initially focused on our requirements for the 2020s, we must also look to the 2030s and beyond.

You know how busy the Royal Navy is and I won't labour the point, suffice to say international security is becoming more challenging, threats are multiplying and demands on the navy are growing.

Added to this is that, as we leave the European Union, the UK is looking to forge new trading partnerships around the world.

Put simply, Global Britain needs a global Navy to match.

It is therefore significant that the government has stated in its manifesto, and again through the National Shipbuilding Strategy, that it views the Type 31e as a means to grow the overall size of the Royal Navy by the 2030s.

If we can deliver a larger fleet, then we can strengthen and potentially expand the Royal Navy's reach to provide the kind of long term presence upon which military and trading alliances are built.

Delivery

This is a hugely exciting prospect, but we must first master the basics.

We can all think of examples of recent projects which have begun with the right intentions, only for timescales to slip, requirements to change and costs to soar.

As Sir John Parker highlighted in his report last year, we end up with a vicious cycle where fewer, more expensive, ships enter service late, and older ships are retained well beyond their sell by date and become increasingly expensive to maintain.

So we need to develop the Type 31e differently if we're going to break out of that cycle.

We've said that the unit price must not exceed £250 million.

For the Royal Navy, this means taking a hard-headed, approach in setting our requirements to keep costs down, while maintaining a credible capability, and then having the discipline to stick to those requirements to allow the project to proceed at pace.

It also means playing our part to help win work for the UK shipbuilding sector from overseas.

So the challenge is to produce a design which is credible, affordable and exportable.

Adaptability is key, we need a design based on common standards, but which offers different customers the ability to specify different configurations and capabilities without the need for significant revisions.

So while it may be necessary to make trade offs in the name of competitiveness, export success means longer production runs, greater economies of scale and lower unit costs, and therein lies the opportunity to increase the size of the Royal Navy.

With a growing fleet it would be perfectly possible for the Royal Navy to forward deploy Type 31e frigates to places like Bahrain Singapore and the South Atlantic, just as we do with some of our smaller vessels today.

If our partners in these regions were to buy or build their own variants, then we could further reduce costs through shared support solutions and common training.

And because of the Royal Navy's own reputation as a trusted supplier of second hand warships, we could look to sell our own Type 31's at the midpoint of their lives and reinvest the savings into follow-on batches.

So by bringing the Royal Navy's requirements in line with the demands of the export market, we have the opportunity to replace the vicious circle with a virtuous one.

And beyond the Type 31e, the benefits could apply to the Royal Navy's longer term requirements, beginning with the fleet solid support ship but also including our future amphibious shipping and eventually the replacement for the Type 45 destroyers as well as other projects that may emerge.

Ultimately, the prize is a more competitive and resilient industrial capacity: one that is better able to withstand short term political and economic tides and can serve the Royal Navy's long term needs.

Conclusion

So, in drawing to a close, I believe we have a precious opportunity before us.

My father worked at the Cammell Laird shipyard for over 40 years. It was visiting him there as a schoolboy and seeing new ships and submarines taking shape that provided one of the key inspirations for me to join the Royal Navy, nearly 40 years ago.

And yet, for most of my career, the fleet has become progressively smaller while the UK shipbuilding sector contracted to such an extent that it reached the margins of sustainability.

But with the Queen Elizabeth class carriers, and the 6 yards involved in their build, we demonstrated that shipbuilding has the potential to be a great British success story once again.

Far beyond Rosyth, we've seen green shoots emerging in shipbuilding across the country, and throughout the supply chain, driven by a new entrepreneurial ambition.

Now the National Shipbuilding Strategy has charted a bold and ambitious plan to capitalise on that and reverse the decline.

And in the Type 31e, we have the chance to develop a ship that can support our national security and our economic prosperity in the decades to come.

The navy is ready and willing.

Now we look to you, our partners in industry, to bring your expertise, your innovation and your ambition to bear in this endeavour.