

£2.5m investment in XL autonomous submarine development

An initial £1 million contract has been awarded to Plymouth-based MSubs Ltd to build a test submarine that will be used to explore the potential capabilities of larger uncrewed underwater vehicles in the future.

Measuring about 30m in length, this extra-large autonomous submarine is significantly larger than autonomous submarines used for beach reconnaissance, allowing it to operate at a range of 3000 nautical miles.

Admiral Tony Radakin, First Sea Lord announced the contract at the Underwater Defence & Security Symposium in Southampton. The First Sea Lord noted how the Ministry of Defence wants to increase its presence in the underwater battlespace and is exploring the use of extra-large uncrewed underwater vehicles (XLUUV) for surveillance, reconnaissance, and anti-submarine warfare operations.

Admiral Tony Radakin, First Sea Lord said:

I am enormously excited about the potential for remotely piloted and autonomous systems to increase our reach and lethality, improve our efficiency and reduce the number of people we have to put in harm's way.

These XLUUVs are at the forefront of underwater systems technology; UK technological developments such as this will be key to the Royal Navy maintaining its battle-winning edge in the underwater environment.

XLUUV submarines are especially adept at covert intelligence gathering. They can leave their dock autonomously and secretly move to the operational area without any embarked crew for up to three months. They are also able to sense hostile targets and report their findings back to the station, making them an important barrier for anti-submarine warfare.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

Submersible autonomous vessels have huge potential and this project could be a game-changer for the UK's underwater capability, taking our submarine service to the next level.

I am pleased that this funding supports MSubs Ltd., a UK based company committed to innovation and research in the autonomous sector.

This is a key example of how defence is doing more than ever before

to give industry the opportunity to research innovative new technology.

Concept image of XLUUV developed by MSubs. MSubs copyright.

DASA delivery manager Adam Moore said:

DASA's involvement is enabling this technology to advance at a much quicker pace and to deliver new capabilities to the Royal Navy years earlier than otherwise possible – making sure the UK stays ahead of our adversaries.

Not only will this enhance the UK's strategic advantage but also boost UK prosperity by supporting small and medium-sized companies like MSubs in Plymouth.

The first phase of DASA's Developing the Royal Navy's Autonomous Underwater Capability programme – run jointly with the Royal Navy and Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) – will see an existing crewed submersible refitted with autonomous control systems.

If initial testing is successful, up to a further £1.5 million is available to further test the new capability – making it the largest joint contract awarded as part of a DASA competition.

Currently, smaller autonomous and remotely piloted submarines are unable to undertake all the tasks of larger crewed submarines.

Paddy Dowsett from MSubs said:

We are thrilled to be awarded this contract through DASA, and have the opportunity to work with defence scientists and experts to develop new and advanced capabilities for the Royal Navy.

This funding will allow the Royal Navy to better understand their future roles and for us to remain at the forefront of Extra Large Uncrewed Underwater Vehicles (XLUUV) design and manufacture in Europe.

DBS Digital win Best Use of Customer Insight Award

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) were nominated as finalists in two separate categories at the UK Customer Satisfaction Awards. The awards are hosted by the Institute of Customer Services, and are the only customer service awards run by the professional body for customer service.

DBS were named as finalists in two separate categories – Best Use of Customer Insight, and Customer Satisfaction Innovation of the Year. We are incredibly pleased to announce that our Digital Team won the Best Use of Customer Insight award.

The team put users and their needs at the heart of everything they do, and explain that their 'customer insight strategy is central to the [online basic check service](#)'.

The team's use of customer insight provides an in-depth understanding of DBS users at each stage of the online journey, and they are able to respond quickly to changing user needs, to ensure the online experience is continuously at a high standard, and that the service meets user needs.

DBS Digital have regularly iterated and improved the online service since it was originally launched in January 2018, and as a result of implementing their Customer Insight Strategy, customer satisfaction has increased from 76% to over 93%!

A huge congratulations to the Team!

A full list of winners and finalists from the awards can be found [here](#).

Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Bulgaria – August 2020

2016 to present FC0, Head, West Africa Department, Africa Directorate 2012 to 2016 Tel Aviv, Deputy Head of Mission 2010 to 2012 Cabinet Office, Principal Private Secretary to the UK National Security Adviser 2009 to 2010 FC0, Private Secretary to the Permanent Under-Secretary 2008 to 2009 FC0, Head, North Africa Team, Middle East and North Africa Department 2003 to 2008 Geneva, Second Secretary, Human Rights, UK Mission to the United Nations 2000 to 2003 FC0, Senior Research Analyst, Global Issues, Research Analysts Department

MOD Leads cross-Government review into the UK's defence and security industrial strategy

The review will identify how the Government can take a more strategic approach to ensure competitive, innovative and world-class defence and security industries. It will also suggest how defence in particular might better drive investment and prosperity across the UK.

The Ministry of Defence will lead a cross-government team, engaging closely with industry, Parliament, and other stakeholders over the course of the review. The findings will feed into the broader Integrated Review of foreign policy, defence, security and international development that the Government is currently conducting.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Our relationship with industry is crucial to maintaining the UK's position as a Tier 1 military power. The review will ensure we are in the best position to support industry whilst guaranteeing the most advanced, world-leading capabilities for our Armed Forces.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin's keynote speech at King's College London. Crown copyright

Many of the UK's defence and security companies are going from strength to strength, but there are a range of challenges for the future. The review will examine the way industry is being impacted by the pace of technological change, the need for innovation and partnership, and increased competition from abroad, alongside the difficulty of ensuring that we have the necessary skills. The review will then consider how these challenges are addressed and how the Government can maximise potential opportunities.

The defence and security industry employs hundreds of thousands of people – including thousands of apprentices – across the UK. From building warships in Scotland and armoured vehicles in Wales, to manufacturing aircraft in England and satellites in Northern Ireland. The MOD invested £19.2 billion into industry, commerce and employment in the last year.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

The UK defence and security industries play a crucial role in

maintaining our global influence and relationships with allies, as well as supporting employment and economic growth across the country.

The review will explore the role of the defence and security sectors in ensuring that we have the right capabilities for safeguarding our national security whilst driving prosperity and innovation across all parts of the United Kingdom.

Our industries are also at the forefront of technology development in creating new ways to prevent and defend against terrorism and serious organised crime. And on the international stage, UK defence and security companies play a crucial role in maintaining the UK's global influence, underpinning our strategic partnerships with key allies.

The analysis undertaken as part of the review will inform findings of the broader Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy which will be taking place in parallel.

[A Written Ministerial Statement has been laid in Parliament](#)

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin's keynote speech at King's College London. Crown copyright

[Coronavirus shows that health and work are inextricably linked](#)

It's not often that a Health Secretary gets invited to the British Chambers of Commerce.

And I don't think you've invited me here because of my reputation as an app developer.

I want to talk today about coronavirus and the contribution that British business can make in helping us as a nation to tackle it.

But I also want to say what a huge honour it is to address you today.

For a pro-business Conservative like me, the keynote speech at the BCC is a bit like being asked to play at Lord's.

This organisation speaks for British business so well because it is so firmly rooted in communities.

I know that because my mum was a member of her local Chamber up in Cheshire.

And because your brilliant chair Sarah was, until very recently, chair of my local Chamber in Haverhill in Suffolk.

Why I back business

Before I turn to coronavirus, I want to say something about why I believe in business, which I think is very important and which we must always hold onto and remember.

It's not just the jobs you create.

It's not just that I'm deeply mindful of who it is that pays for the NHS.

It's more than that.

It's that business done right is a force for good in the world.

Because great businesses succeed by solving other people's problems.

Look at the life sciences.

Just recently, I announced a deal with Novartis that will mean the NHS is among the first in the world to access a brand-new cholesterol lowering drug at scale.

This is a twice-yearly injection that could prevent tens of thousands of heart attacks.

Life sciences: the clue's in the name. They save and improve lives.

And business done right is a moral force for good because it links effort and reward.

It's about something for something.

For this is really personal.

I grew up watching my parents battle, against the odds, to build a brilliant software business.

And I know what the challenges feel like.

In the recession of the early 90s, we almost lost everything because of a late payment problem.

The business was strong, orders were coming in, but we were literally one cheque from going under.

And I remember the feeling of injustice, that everything they'd worked so hard for was on the line, all because of a problem that was not of their making and was outside of their control.

Now fortunately, that cheque came through and the business went on to thrive. But that experience is engraved on my heart.

In politics I've always worked for economic security as the foundation of everything else.

Because I know, like you know, that the economy is not just numbers on a spreadsheet, it's people's hard work and livelihoods and dreams.

Right now, leading the healthcare system's response to coronavirus is of course taking up the overwhelming majority of my time.

But I'm very conscious that over the last few weeks, small businesses across the country will have been listening to the news and worrying about the future.

Something outside their control.

So let me turn to the biggest near-term challenge facing British business.

Coronavirus action plan

Our approach to tackling coronavirus is to prepare for the worst and work for the best.

We're basing our preparations not just on the most likely scenario but on the reasonable worst-case scenario.

This week you'll have seen we published our 4-part action plan to contain, delay, research and mitigate the virus.

That plan is driven by the science and guided by the expert advice of the Chief Medical Officer and others.

Contain – the phase we're currently in – means detecting the early cases, tracing their close contacts and preventing the disease from taking hold in the UK for as long as is reasonably possible.

This approach has bought time for the NHS to ramp up its preparations.

But the scientific advice is that we may not be able to contain the virus forever, especially if the number of cases continues to rise in Europe.

At that point, on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer, we will activate the next phase of our plan, which is to delay.

This is about slowing the spread, lowering the peak impact and pushing it away from the winter season when the NHS is under maximum pressure.

I will always prioritise protection of life, but we will seek to minimise the social and economic disruption too.

Because the scientific advice is very clear that going too far or too fast carries risks of its own.

Ultimately, we are working to a timetable that is set by the progress of the

virus itself.

With 85 confirmed positive cases in the UK, shutting down all our schools and universities for example would not have a clinical benefit at this stage.

But it would impose huge social and economic costs.

So we will follow the science.

And that brings me to the third phase which is research.

Research been ongoing ever since the moment COVID-19 was identified at the end of last year.

We have some of the finest scientific minds in the world working day and night on a vaccine.

But we do not think a vaccine will be available in the coming months.

And just as important, is research to understand what currently available drugs and treatments might help those who are already sick.

I'm incredibly proud of the team at Public Health England who were among the first to sequence the genome of the virus.

And that British businesses like Oxford Nanopore are providing the testing kits used around the world.

We could not do this without you.

If coronavirus does become established in the UK population, we will only be able to delay widespread transmission for so long.

At that point, we will move to the mitigate phase of our plan.

This is about focusing our resources as a nation on supporting those who are most seriously ill and keeping essential services going at a time when large parts of the workforce may be off sick.

You may have seen some of the estimates that we published in the action plan.

We have a range of options to support businesses, supply chains and the wider economy should the situation require it.

I know that the Business Department and the Treasury are thinking very hard about how to do this in the budget next week.

I know the hit that many businesses are already taking.

I understand the sense of trepidation that something outside your control is such a looming risk on the horizon.

I will do everything I reasonably can, not just to protect business but to help business through.

This is going to be a difficult time for us all.

What I can offer is transparency and support and a rational science-led approach.

And I know this, not least because I started my life surrounded by small business: we in government can't do this alone.

The role of business

Tackling coronavirus is a national effort.

As UK businesses, you have a crucial part to play in helping us respond.

First, we need you to engage.

Engage with us, keep talking to us so we incorporate your views into our preparations.

Second, we need you to stay informed.

We've published specific [guidance for employers on GOV.UK](#).

It tells you what to do if someone in your workplace comes into contact with COVID-19, along with advice for responding to it.

Third and most important of all, we all need to support our employees to do the right thing, including to self-isolate if necessary.

Yesterday we announced that we will bring forward measures to allow the payment of statutory sick pay from the first day that you are sick.

Many occupational sick pay systems already do this.

Our principle is clear: no one should be penalised for doing the right thing and following the official medical advice to self-isolate if they test positive.

It's in your employees' interest, it's in your interest, and it's in the national interest.

Health and work

One of the things that this experience has taught us is that health and work are umbilically linked.

It's a lesson that we can't afford to forget once we get through this.

Yes, of course you need a strong economy to pay for the NHS, but a strong NHS is good for business too.

Healthcare that's always there for you, unconditionally, supports a risk-taking entrepreneurial economy.

And increasingly, it's recognised that the nation's health is not just the NHS.

We know that only around a quarter of what leads to longer, healthier lives is the result of what happens in the health service.

A quarter.

The rest is down to genetics, the environment and the lifestyle choices we make.

Businesses have real influence over the last two.

A job that's purposeful and rewarding is good for your health. And almost by definition, employers have a chance to intervene much earlier than the NHS.

We all need to play our part.

Mental health support. Musculoskeletal support. Bike racks and shower facilities. Flexible working. Support for healthy eating.

These are not businesses costs, they are investments. Just like your investment in your skills and training budget.

It's how, after this epidemic, we will bear down on the £9 billion a year lost to sickness absence.

And it's one big part of how we deliver on our long-term goal of 5 extra years of healthy life.

We are not powerless in the face of this virus.

We have the best minds and a clear plan of action.

Everyone can do something, even if it's as simple as washing your hands more often.

The coming weeks will be tough, but with calm heads and clear determination together we will see this through.