

£30 million dry dock contract supports 300 Scottish jobs

Press release

£30 million contract for dry-dock maintenance for the Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) aircraft carriers has been awarded to Babcock International Group, in Scotland



- £30 million to provide dry dock maintenance for Queen Elizabeth Class carriers
- 300 jobs supported across Rosyth dockyard and wider supply chain
- Follows both QEC carriers undertaking international engagements with allies

The 10-year agreement will ensure the two warships – HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales – are able to undergo dry dockings for planned maintenance and repair at Babcock’s Rosyth facilities, meaning the vessels continue to operate safely and remain available for defence operations, both for the UK and its allies.

The work will help to sustain 300 jobs across the Rosyth facility and the wider supply chain, contributing to UK prosperity, strengthening the Union and supporting the government’s levelling-up ambitions.

Defence Procurement Minister Jeremy Quin said:

The Queen Elizabeth Class Carriers are the flagships of our Royal Navy and it’s crucial they remain ready to protect and defend the UK and our allies.

Both carriers had their final construction in Rosyth, and I’m pleased they will return for their dry-dock maintenance, supporting vital jobs and skills in Scotland.

QECs require dry-docking periodically throughout their lives to undertake

maintenance and repair activities that will ensure the UK continues to have a flexible and modern naval force that can respond to future threats.

The QECs continue to uphold security both in UK waters and overseas. HMS Prince of Wales recently supported [Exercise Cold Response](#) with her sister ship [HMS Queen Elizabeth carrying out vital training and exercises](#) in waters close to the UK to keep her ready for operations anywhere in the world.

Steve Coates, DE&S Queen Elizabeth Class Group Leader, said:

Securing this contract is another important step on the QEC journey. The agreed partnership is a real testament to the great working relationship forged between the MOD and industry. The work that will take place will help to sustain vital jobs and skills at the Rosyth shipyard where the carriers were built and, by drawing on an extensive supply chain, will contribute to wider UK prosperity.

The contract was awarded by Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) through a robust and transparent competition, encouraging strong bids from viable dockyards with the requisite facilities and experience of docking large vessels, whether military or civilian.

Sean Donaldson, Babcock's Managing Director of Marine Engineering and Systems and the Rosyth site, said:

We are delighted to have been awarded the contract to provide dry dockings for the aircraft carriers over the next decade. The investments in our Rosyth infrastructure and facilities over the last 10-years mean we are ideally placed to deliver projects of this size and scale. The programme will also benefit from the extensive knowledge and expertise of Babcock's skilled workforce which is steeped in carrier experience. It's a really proud moment for us.

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[COP President Alok Sharma marks six months since landmark COP26 conference](#)

with Glasgow speech

- Mr Sharma expected to say that while Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has put unprecedented pressure on global energy security, the fundamental challenge of climate change must remain a top priority of governments around the world
- The event follows last week's productive May Ministerial on Implementation, hosted by the Danish Government in Copenhagen and co-chaired by the UK and Egypt, as COP27 President-designate

COP President Alok Sharma will today (16 May 2022) return to Glasgow's Scottish Event Campus to mark six months since the conclusion of COP26 to warn world leaders that failure to honour commitments made at COP26 would be an 'act of monstrous self-harm'.

Mr Sharma will set out his vision for the second half of the UK's COP Presidency, as he is joined by representatives from business, civil society and young people in Scotland, alongside a virtual global audience.

Mr Sharma will outline the crucial importance of addressing the chronic climate crisis alongside more immediate concerns.

He will say that the world is facing serious crises. Russia's brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine has shifted geopolitics. As governments are responding to rising prices, food and energy security challenges and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, Mr Sharma is also expected to say that 'the current crises should increase, not diminish, our determination to deliver on what we agreed here at COP26, and honour the Glasgow Climate Pact.' He is expected to urge world leaders to show that 'though the world has changed our resolve has not'

The COP26 President is expected to stress the urgency of countries fulfilling promises made at COP26 and that the global community must move much faster in taking climate action over the next six months, than over the last. 'Work to deliver on the commitments made here in Glasgow has quietly continued.' he is expected to say, yet "we need every nation to pick up the pace".

Mr Sharma will also outline the increasingly stark scientific warnings of the impacts of climate change as recently set out in two major reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

This evidence, Mr Sharma is expected to say, 'demonstrates unequivocally that the window of time we have to act is closing fast, that we must urgently adapt and reduce emissions, because current targets are not enough.'

Mr Sharma will also highlight the devastation caused by extreme weather

conditions around the world, including ongoing heatwaves in India and Pakistan, where a billion people have been exposed to extreme heat of almost 50C.

While welcoming progress made in the six months since COP26, Mr Sharma will look ahead to priorities in the lead up to COP27 and the UK's work with Egypt to drive delivery ahead of the Summit in Sharm-El-Sheikh later this year.

Underscoring this urgent priority, Mr Sharma is expected to say: 'Every country must respond to the call to revisit and strengthen their nationally determined contribution (NDC). And they must do so in 2022. The Glasgow Pact calls on countries to look again at their NDCs, not at some vague point in the future, but this year, in 2022.'

The speech closely follows last week's [May Ministerial Meeting on Implementation](#), co-chaired by the UK and Egypt COP Presidencies.

The Ministerial, held in Copenhagen on May 12 and 13, saw over 40 countries renew their urgent focus on implementation and practical action to deliver commitments and pledges made at COP26 and within the Glasgow Climate Pact.

At the meeting countries agreed that, despite the challenging global context, climate ambition and commitments remain serious and credible, from adapting to climate impacts, averting, minimising and addressing loss and damage, to reducing emissions and keeping 1.5C alive and mobilising finance.

Today, May 16, also sees the publication of the COP26 Sustainability Report, which demonstrates the lasting, positive legacy of COP26 on the city of Glasgow and beyond.

The report sets out the conference's impact on Scottish charities and low-income families, including donations of 6,000 items of furniture, 15,000 square metres of carpets, and 600 laptops, some of which it is hoped will soon go to Ukrainian refugees.

It also confirms the UK's achievement in implementing the International Standard for Event Sustainability Management making it the first COP summit to meet the international standard for carbon neutrality, PAS 2060.

[**UK Minister for Asia visits Mongolia to boost collaboration in trade, climate change and education**](#)

Press release

Minister for Asia, Amanda Milling visited Mongolia this week (11-13 May) following a two-day visit to South Korea.



During her visit the Minister focused on areas of UK-Mongolia bilateral relations such as trade and investment, foreign policy issues, climate change and education.

Minister Milling also co-chaired the UK-Mongolia Roundtable Dialogue with the Mongolian Minister of Education and Science and the Foreign Policy Dialogue with the Deputy Foreign Minister. These covered a range of bilateral and international issues.

Minister Milling also met other Ministers and senior officials during her visit. She raised global issues, in particular the importance of international condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Minister welcomed Mongolian humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and urged Mongolia to join the international community's call to uphold the UN charter in Ukraine and press for an end to the violence. The Minister also discussed continued provocations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and sought Mongolia's views on international engagement with DPRK and deterring provocations.

Minister for Asia, Amanda Milling, said:

I was delighted to make my first visit to Mongolia as UK Minister for Asia.

I held productive discussions on a range of bilateral and international issues and look forward to strengthening our relationship with Mongolia even further.

Seeing the Oyu Tolgoi copper mine and the transformational impact of UK investment was a particular highlight.

The Minister also had the opportunity to pay a visit to the Oyu Tolgoi copper mine in the South Gobi. It is managed by the UK/Australian company Rio Tinto and is the largest investment by a UK company in Mongolia. The mine is the largest employer in Mongolia and a significant contributor to Mongolia's development. The Minister was able to see the new underground phase and operations across the mine. It is set to be the 3rd largest copper mine in

the world when fully on-stream, with amazing potential for UK investment and Mongolia.

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[New airport-style security in prisons sees record level of drug busts](#)

Press release

Tougher airport-style security rolled out across the prison estate in England and Wales has intercepted almost 20,000 attempts to smuggle illegal contraband behind bars.



- New X-ray scanners have intercepted almost 20,000 smuggling plots
- Over 40 of the most challenging prisons have also been kitted out with an array of additional new technology including drug-trace machines and metal detection archways
- Prisons White Paper outlines new strategy to transform prisons and cut crime

Over the last 2 years, more than 70 cutting-edge X-ray body scanners have been installed in all closed male prisons, producing super sharp images of concealed contraband so staff can easily find and stop dangerous items from entering jails.

These scanners have thwarted almost 20,000 attempts to smuggle contraband on to wings, including one massive haul consisting of 81 individually wrapped white rocks of crack cocaine.

Building on this success, since the beginning of the year 42 of the most challenging prisons have been kitted out with even more high-end equipment. This includes new drug-trace machines that can detect microscopic smears of

new psychoactive substances such as 'spice' on mail and items of clothing – stopping dangerous drugs from getting onto wings and wreaking havoc.

Gates at these prisons have also been beefed up with new metal detection archways and wands, extra drug dogs and biometric identification for the public. As a result, for the first time ever staff can effectively search visitors coming into jails and seize items such as phones and weapons that can fuel further crime and violence behind bars.

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary Dominic Raab said:

With this innovative new technology, we are enforcing our zero tolerance approach to drugs, knives and mobile phones in prisons. Illicit contraband endangers our hard-working staff and thwarts the efforts of other prisoners who are serious about their rehabilitation.

Alongside abstinence-based drug treatment, getting more prisoners than ever into work and improving facilities to maintain family ties, our strategy will make our streets safer and protect the public.

This success reflects record £100 million government investment in innovative technology to keep drugs, mobile phones and weapons out of jails.

The government's ambitious plan to transform the prison estate and cut crime builds on this, as outlined in December's Prisons Strategy White Paper.

Commitments in the White Paper include:

- All new build prisons to be equipped with security measures that cut crime as standard, including the latest technological innovations to thwart drugs, phones and weapons; X-ray body scanners and biometric visitor identification
- New facilities to support those with drug and alcohol issues to turn their backs on debilitating addictions that stand in the way of proper rehabilitation, including abstinence-based therapy
- A new Prisoner Education Service will help every prisoner leaving custody to gain the basics they need to find work on release
- Transparent prison performance data and new targets for prison governors, with an emphasis on reducing reoffending, improving safety and security, getting prisoners off drugs and improving basic skills such as numeracy and literacy

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New prescription charge freeze to help ease cost of living

- Freeze will help ease the cost of living pressures on households, saving £17 million overall
- Comes alongside record government NHS investment to tackle the Covid backlog and reduce waiting times

NHS prescription charges will be frozen for the first time in 12 years to help with the cost of living.

Charges usually increase in line with average inflation. This year – in a move not seen for over a decade – the cost for prescriptions will remain the same to help ease cost of living pressures and ensure prescription medication remains accessible.

This means people in England who pay prescription charges are saving £17 million overall. Charges for prescriptions will remain at £9.35 for a single charge or £30.25 for a 3-month prescription prepayment certificate (PPCs). 12 month PPCs will remain at £108.10 and can be paid for in instalments, meaning people can get all the medicines they need for just over £2 a week.

In addition to the freeze on charges, the NHS Low Income scheme offers help with prescription payments, with free prescriptions for eligible people within certain groups such as pensioners, students, and those who receive state benefits or live in care homes.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

“The rise in the cost of living has been unavoidable as we face global challenges and the repercussions of Putin’s illegal war in Ukraine. Whilst we can’t completely prevent these rises, where we can help – we absolutely will.

“This is why I am freezing prescription charges to help ease some of these pressures and put money back in people’s pockets.”

The government and NHS is working to tackle the covid backlogs while reforming routine care services, ending long waits and improving patient care. The pandemic has put huge pressure on health and care services and over the next three years, a record £39 billion will be invested through the Health and Care Levy, so the NHS has the funding it needs. The NHS is opening new surgical hubs and 160 community diagnostic centres so patients have easier access to tests closer to home – with 88 already open, delivering over 800,000 scans.

In addition, the Health and Care Bill received Royal Assent last month, enacting the most significant health legislation in a decade into law. It marks an important step in the government's ambitious health and care agenda, setting up systems and structures to reform how health and adult social care work together, tackle long waiting lists built up during the pandemic, and address some of the long-term challenges faced by the country including a growing and ageing population, chronic conditions and inequalities in health outcomes.

The government is listening to people's concerns and targeting support at the lowest paid in society, with measures worth over £22 billion in 2022-23 to help with the cost of energy bills and to ensure people keep more of their money. This includes raising the threshold at which people start to pay National Insurance to £12,570, providing a £330 a year tax cut to 30 million workers in July. The National Living Wage has risen to £9.50 per hour – an extra £1,000 a year for a full-time worker, and taxes have been cut for the lowest paid workers on Universal Credit – so they can keep more of what they earn.

The prescription freeze will also apply to NHS wigs and fabric supports; these prices will remain at current levels:

- Surgical brassiere £30.70
- Abdominal or spinal support £46.30
- Stock modacrylic wig £75.70
- Partial human hair wig £200.50
- Full bespoke human hair wig £293.20

You are exempt from charges if you:

- are 60 or over
- are under 16
- are 16 to 18 and in full-time education
- are pregnant or have had a baby in the previous 12 months and have a valid maternity exemption certificate (MatEx)
- have a specified medical condition and have a valid medical exemption certificate (MedEx)
- have a continuing physical disability that prevents you going out without help from another person and have a valid medical exemption certificate (MedEx)
- hold a valid war pension exemption certificate and the prescription is for your accepted disability
- are an NHS inpatient.