

News story: Royal Navy's first new Offshore Patrol Vessel formally named

The 90-metre warship, which will be tasked with vital counter-terrorism, anti-smuggling and maritime defence duties, was named HMS Forth in honour of the famous Scottish river in a ceremony at the BAE Systems Scotstoun shipyard.

The ship will soon depart on sea trials before entering service with the Royal Navy in 2018. She is the first of a fleet of five new Batch 2 River-class OPVs being built on the Clyde which are all expected to be in service by 2021.

The work to build HMS Forth and her sister ships is sustaining around 800 Scottish jobs, as well as the critical skills required to build the Type 26 Global Combat Ships, construction of which will begin at the Govan shipyard in the summer, subject to final contract negotiations.

HMS Forth was named by the Lady Sponsor Rachel Johnstone-Burt who, in tribute to Scottish shipbuilding and in keeping with Naval tradition, broke a bottle of whisky on the bow.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin, said:

As part of a sustained programme delivering world-class ships and submarines, HMS Forth's naming is a vitally important part of the Government's ten-year £178 billion plan to provide our Armed Forces with the equipment they need.

From counter-narcotics operations in the Caribbean, to securing the UK's borders on patrols closer to home, the Royal Navy's new Offshore Patrol Vessels will help protect our interests around the world.

HMS Forth, the fifth Royal Navy vessel to bear the name over the past two centuries, is affiliated with the city of Stirling, maintaining a connection which began when the people of the city adopted a previous ship with the name Forth during the Second World War.

It is an advanced vessel equipped with a 30mm cannon and flight deck capable of accommodating a Merlin helicopter, and manned by a crew of 58 sailors. Displacing around 2,000 tonnes, she has a maximum speed of around 24 knots and can sail 5,500 nautical miles without having to resupply.

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

With the naming of HMS Forth, the Royal Navy looks forward to

another impending arrival in our future Fleet. In a few short years, these five Offshore Patrol Vessels will be busy protecting the security of UK waters and those of our overseas territories.

They are arriving in service alongside a new generation of attack submarines and Fleet tankers, and will be followed shortly by new frigates and other auxiliaries; all of this capability will coalesce around the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers. Together, they form a truly balanced Fleet, able to provide security at sea, promote international partnership, deter aggression and, when required, fight and win.

The MOD has invested £648 million in the OPV programme, and its delivery is one of the key commitments laid out in the Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015.

Chief of Materiel (Fleet) for the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation, Vice Admiral Simon Lister, said:

HMS Forth, part of the updated River class of Offshore Patrol Vessels, is one of the most advanced ships of its type and will provide the Royal Navy with the means to undertake vital operations safely and effectively.

The naming is a significant milestone in the life of HMS Forth and in the wider Offshore Patrol Vessel programme, which is well on track to deliver all five of the new ships by the end of 2019.

The Royal Navy currently operates four Batch 1 Offshore Patrol Vessels, one based in the Falkland Islands and three at HMNB Portsmouth, operating globally on tasks ranging from counter-narcotics operations to Atlantic patrols.

Press release: Lord Chancellor marks International Women's Day with Women In Law London

To mark International Women's Day (8 March 2017), the first female Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss met lawyers from across the capital for an event designed to inspire the next generation of women leaders in law.

The event at Inner Temple was hosted by Women In Law London (WILL), the first

ever grassroots network designed to provide talented female lawyers with contacts and mentoring to help them progress.

WILL Advisory Board member and General Counsel and Head of Financial Compliance for Roche UK, Funke Abimbola, led a Q&A with the Lord Chancellor before opening up questions for audience members.

During the evening the Lord Chancellor set out efforts to address barriers facing women in the legal service, following meetings with Magic Circle and Silver Circle firms, the Law Society and Bar Council on how we can widen the industry's talent pool.

This includes work with the Lord Chief Justice and Lord Kakkar, Chair of the Judicial Appointments Committee, to improve diversity in the judiciary by opening up the High Court to "direct entry candidates", meaning female solicitors and barristers without judicial experience can apply.

Commenting on the event and the need to improve diversity the Lord Chancellor, Elizabeth Truss said:

I am pleased to support the important work Women in Law does to champion women in the legal profession. Our brilliant legal system needs to reflect the diverse nature of our society, and a justice system which represents everyone improves public confidence and trust.

I want to see more women and ethnic minorities in the judiciary and in senior levels of law firms, but I've been clear this is not diversity for diversity's sake. It's about talent for talent's sake.

We want the best and the brightest from every background. If you have the skills, the drive and the talent to reach the top of your profession then it's vital we tap into this so we can continue to lead the world in the increasingly competitive legal services sector.

International Women's Day is a reminder there is more to be done, but my message is clear – when you widen the pool of talent from which lawyers and judges are drawn, you make the justice system stronger.

Suzanne Szczetnikowicz, Chair Women In Law London added:

The huge uptake we've had in WILL membership since our launch in 2014 is a sign of the desire of female solicitors in London to see real change in the profession, to build their confidence levels and to network with like-minded individuals.

Greater diversity of workforce in a service sector business makes

for, amongst other things, a more creative approach to problem-solving, flexibility and innovation in policy-making and a wider range of longer-lasting client relationships.

We want to continue to encourage and empower our members individually as well as to drive change at a firm and professional level. Firms and businesses need to ensure that diversity and inclusion becomes a true core value implemented at all levels. They should maintain a dialogue with their women and make sure that they are not, even unconsciously, opting women out.

The WILL mantra is to promote and engage the next generation of women leaders in law. A large part of this is about moving the needle so that the majority of entrants to the solicitor profession being female for the past 20 years is much more closely reflected in the proportions at the highest levels.

1. Launched in 2014, Women In Law London (WILL) is a network with over 2,400 members and senior legal champions, representing both private practice and in-house lawyers at over 350 different firms and companies. Its ambition is to promote and engage the next generation of women leaders in law.
2. The organisation was masterminded by five London lawyers, Sascha Grimm, Cooley, Suzanne Szczetnikowicz, Milbank, Sophie Bragg, Mishcon de Reya, Ellen Hughes-Jones of Locke Lord and Fatema Orjela, Sidley Austin, to improve the retention of female talent in the profession and help identify barriers to senior partnership.
3. Founded as a network by associates for associates, WILL is supported by an Advisory Panel of senior leaders and partners. For more information on the organisation see: <http://www.womeninlawlondon.com/home.html> / [@WomenInLawLon](#)
4. For more information on our work to improve the promotion of talent in the legal industry see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/women-in-the-legal-industry>
5. For more information on International Women's Day see: <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/>

Chinese scientists plan wearable device that can listen, speak

Chinese scientists are researching the new material graphene to produce a smart wearable device to enable those with hearing and speaking disability to listen and speak normally.

Ren Tianling, a professor at the Institute of Microelectronics of Tsinghua

University, is leading the team on the device, taking full advantage of graphene's special characteristics, such as excellent electric and thermal conductivity.

Graphene is a thin layer of pure carbon, a two-dimensional form of carbon in sheets just one atom thick, tougher than a diamond, yet lightweight and flexible, and it is a material with extremely strong electric and heat-conducting properties.

Ren's team has published a research paper on producing the wearable device made of graphene, in Nature Communications, an international science journal, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

The porous graphene material would make the device detect weak vibrations while it could produce sounds in a wide spectrum from 100Hz to 40kHz under the thermoacoustic effect.

Researchers would first record and encode the disabled people's sounds, such as coughs, whispers and screams, in different intensity and frequency into groups and then match each group with sounds of words, phrases or sentences.

When the device detects the sounds in groups, it will "speak" the words, phrases or sentences.

Tao Luqi, a doctoral student who took part in the research work, said the deaf-mute people need to compose the codes of their sounds in groups and remember them. It is something similar to typing the keys on a keyboard, and the device would respond to the codes by speaking the words back.

The device would also create the sentences in different tones as it would be capable of capturing even small differences such as high or low pitch.

[Women hit six times harder this Budget by government cuts](#)

House of Commons analysis commissioned by Labour has revealed that as of the Chancellor's budget yesterday, women continue to be hit six times harder than men by government policies.

Sarah Champion MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities, said:

"Yesterday the Prime Minister and Chancellor talked up the significance of International Women's Day yet their warm words have amounted to nothing.

"Calls for a budget that works for women have been ignored.

“Women are still bearing the brunt of this Tory Government’s failed austerity agenda – with the 86 per cent impact figure on women remaining unchanged since last year. Things are just as bad as ever for women under this Tory Government.

“Labour calls on the Government to urgently publish analysis of the true impact of their budgets and spending announcements on women and to explain how they intend to reverse this disproportionate impact.

Under a Labour Government, all economic policies will be gender audited to ensure that we have an economy that works for all.”

[China issues report on US human rights](#)

China published a report on the United States’ human rights situation on Thursday.

The report, titled “The Human Rights Record of the United States in 2016,” was released by the Information Office of the State Council, China’s cabinet, in response to “the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016” issued by the U.S. State Department on March 3 local time.

China’s report says that the United States poses once again as “the judge of human rights”.

“Wielding ‘the baton of human rights,’ it pointed fingers and cast blame on the human rights situation in many countries while paying no attention to its own terrible human rights problems,” it says.

“With the gunshots lingering in people’s ears behind the Statue of Liberty, worsening racial discrimination and the election farce dominated by money politics, the self-proclaimed human rights defender has exposed its human rights ‘myth’ with its own deeds,” it added.

Concrete facts show that the United States saw continued deterioration in some key aspects of its existent human rights issues last year, according to the report.

The United States had the second highest prisoner rate, with 693 prisoners per 100,000 of the national population, the report says.

Roughly 2.2 million people were incarcerated in the United States in 2014. And there had been 70 million Americans incarcerated – that’s almost one in three adults – with some form of criminal record, the report cites media reports as saying.

Occurrence of gun-related crimes also sustained a high level, according to the report.

There were a total of 58,125 gun violence incidents, including 385 mass shootings, in the United States in 2016, leaving 15,039 killed and 30,589 injured, says the report, citing figures from a toll report by the Gun Violence Archive.

In 2016, the U.S. social polarization became more serious, with the proportion of adults who had full-time jobs hitting a new low since 1983, income gaps continuing to widen, the size of middle class reaching a turning point and beginning to shrink, and living conditions of the lower class deteriorating, the report says.

According to consulting firm Gallup, the percentage of Americans who said they were in the middle or upper-middle class had fallen by 10 percentage points, from an average of 61 percent between 2000 and 2008 to 51 percent in 2016.

“That drop meant 25 million people in the United States fared much worse in economic terms,” it says.

Besides, one in seven Americans, or at least 45 million people, lived in poverty, the report quotes the Daily Mail as saying.