

Manchester and North West rail passengers to see more reliable journeys with £84 million investment

- £84 million package to increase reliability of trains in Greater Manchester and the North
- works will deliver trackside upgrades, platform extensions for longer trains and bigger depots across the region
- the funding begins a decade's worth of investment that will transform rail in the North

Passengers across the North West are set to benefit from an £84 million government investment to cut delays and improve the reliability of trains across the region.

At Manchester Victoria station today (11 March 2022), Rail Minister Wendy Morton MP, announced a package of infrastructure upgrades that will transform the day-to-day journeys of train passengers in the North West.

The work is part of the Secretary of State's Manchester Recovery Task Force's (MRTF) plans to boost service reliability and put the passenger at the heart of the journey.

Works are now underway with upgrades to track-side equipment between Manchester and Liverpool and platform extensions on the Cumbrian route. This will support the introduction of longer trains with extra seats and an upcoming timetable change across the region will increase reliability.

Further works next year will see additional platform extensions to some of the busiest routes across the North West and West Yorkshire, supporting the rollout of longer electric trains by Northern.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

This £84 million investment will make trains more reliable for the people of Manchester and beyond and kicks off a decade's worth of improvements across the region.

The Transpennine Route Upgrade, the Integrated Rail Plan and Northern Powerhouse Rail will transform the lives of passengers across the region for generations to come.

As we level up the country, we're determined to use rail to boost local economies, create greener journeys and change lives for the better.

The funding will also allow vital development work to continue schemes across

Greater Manchester that will benefit passengers across the North West, including:

- improved passenger facilities at Manchester Piccadilly, Victoria and Manchester International Airport stations
- resignalling along the Castlefield Corridor and remodelling of Manchester Oxford Road station
- work on the [Transpennine Route Upgrade \(TRU\)](#) also continues with the electrification and resignalling of the line and track renewals to deliver faster, more frequent and reliable trains for passengers

TRU will pave the way for [Northern Powerhouse Rail](#), transforming rail journeys across the North including between Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and York, delivering on the government's levelling up agenda to improve connectivity, support economic growth and deliver real benefits for passengers and communities in the North.

The next stage of work on the TRU continues with further track and signalling upgrades, following on from works over Christmas and New Year.

All of these improvements are in addition to the [Integrated Rail Plan](#), which is investing £96 billion investment across the North and Midlands to transform rail services, boost economic growth and prosperity, level up the region and create thousands of jobs up to 10 years quicker than under previous plans.

Dave Penney, passenger strategy director for Network Rail's North West and Central region, said:

Improving passenger journeys has been at the heart of the rail industry's hard work to tackle congestion through Central Manchester and this major government investment will mean fewer delays and add 20% more peak-time seats from December 2022.

Network Rail has worked with the whole industry as part of the Manchester Recovery Task Force on how to maximise this £84 million investment that promises to boost capacity and improve connectivity across the North of England as part of Britain's rail recovery.

Matthew Golton, Managing Director at TransPennine Express, said:

We're committed to delivering real change for our customers across the North and into Scotland. This multimillion-pound package that enables the development of needed infrastructure capacity will work hand-in-hand with our own investments in new journey opportunities, new trains and station improvements to give customers the modern, reliable and efficient rail service they deserve.

Nick Donovan, Managing Director at Northern Trains, said:

This investment will improve the infrastructure that will allow trains with more carriages to run through Manchester, benefiting the wider network and the thriving leisure economy of the North.

Our customers returning to rail will have already noticed many improvements we have made in the last 2 years. These include better stations and new trains, and this project will further add to that improved experience.

Expressing our support for the Secretary-General's vision for a more modern and reformed UN

Mr Vice-President, before I comment on this final cluster of proposals, allow me to address the situation in Ukraine.

Russia continues its unprovoked, premeditated and barbaric attack against a sovereign democratic state. The UK and the international community stand united. We will make sure the Russian government pays a heavy price for its actions. We will work together to ensure that the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine is restored. I will now turn to the specific proposals in this cluster.

The UK strongly supports the Secretary-General's vision for a UN 2.0 – a modern, reformed and upgraded UN that is fully equipped to respond effectively to the global challenges that lie ahead. To succeed, we must choose the most catalytic interventions and be mindful of our budgetary limitations. We welcome the 'Quintet of change', which will build the capabilities we need to strengthen mandate delivery, transform decision-making, and deliver greater value for money and more targeted impact. We support the push for greater focus on results, which is critical to demonstrate to the public the real-world impact and value of the UN. We continue to push for greater coherence across the system. Existing reforms provide a solid foundation for change and have already delivered benefits, including by strengthening the UN's COVID response. Sustained effort, including from member states, is needed to ensure these reforms deliver their full potential.

We recognise the need to put the organisation on a more stable financial footing and note the particular challenges faced by the human rights mechanism. Simply shifting more activity onto assessed budgets is not the solution to providing more predictable and sustainable funding. We would support more effective, agile and flexible use of available resources, including the repurposing of existing funds. We strongly support the move to

an annual budget and stand ready to consider further ways to improve the budget process.

But we must look outwards as well as in. We welcome the proposal for more listening and participation to improve trust and engagement and ensure the UN is accountable to those it serves.

We must invest in our partnerships. We support greater civil society and private sector engagement across our work and call for protections for participating stakeholders against reprisals. Proposed Civil Society focal points must be properly implemented, monitored and must augment existing engagement routes. We welcome further information on the Office for Partnerships which should improve physical access as well as digital.

Lastly, we welcome the focus on resolving the challenges of the future and look forward to further information on the High-Level Advisory Board's process to prepare for the Summit of the Future. We also welcome further discussion on the Scientific Advisory Board. The UN must draw on interdisciplinary, independent scientific advice in an agile, flexible way.

Mr Vice-President, Our Common Agenda can be a moment to bring us together. The UK stands ready to partner with the UN, member states, civil society and other stakeholders on many of the elements contained in the report, from getting more girls into schools to tackling climate change to bridging the digital divide. Let us be strategic, focused and targeted in how we deliver it.

Thank you.

600 public buildings in Wales levelled up with full fibre broadband

- £11.5m broadband boost to improve public services in North Wales, South East Wales, Pembrokeshire and rural Welsh areas
- Buildings connected include hospitals, GP surgeries, care homes, libraries and youth centres
- Funding will encourage broadband firms to extend networks to surrounding homes and businesses
- It marks the completion of the largest public sector broadband project in Wales funded by the UK government

More than 600 hospitals, police stations, libraries and other public buildings in Wales have been connected to lightning-fast full fibre broadband under a UK Government drive to level up public services and speed up rollout.

It marks the completion of the largest public sector broadband project in

Wales delivered funded by the UK government as part of it is levelling up strategy across the whole of the UK – making a tangible difference to the lives of families, people and communities across Wales.

Vital local services including leisure centres, tourist destinations and youth centres across North Wales, South East Wales, Pembrokeshire and other areas can now access internet speeds at least ten times faster than their old mostly copper-based connections thanks to a £11.5 million UK Government investment.

All 620 buildings now have greatly improved and ultra-reliable connectivity to help improve the productivity and user experience of the public services they offer and, as their requirements increase in the future, they will be able to tap into speeds of more than a gigabit (1,000 megabits) per second.

It means doctors and police officers can save time waiting for large files such as x-rays and CCTV footage to download, care home residents will get better access to online therapy and entertainment, and library users will enjoy faster Wi-Fi for surfing the web.

The connections will also incentivise commercial broadband providers to deliver upgrades to surrounding homes and businesses in Wales by allowing them to extend the government-funded gigabit network, which is cheaper and quicker than having to build it from scratch.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Julia Lopez said:

“ We’ve funded hundreds of faster broadband upgrades across Wales to put public services in the digital fast lane so they can deliver more for communities.

“ This is on top of our £5 billion Project Gigabit which will bring better broadband to tens of thousands of rural homes and businesses across Wales and the UK that would otherwise be left behind.”

The high-speed connections are up and running in 166 public buildings across the Cardiff Capital Region, including in Cardiff, Newport, Bridgend, Caerphilly and Pontypool and more rural areas such as Hengoed, Treharris and Usk.

In North Wales 311 public buildings have been upgraded including in Colwyn Bay, Rhuddlan, Rhyl, Llandudno, Wrexham and smaller towns and villages like Betws-y-Coed and Cerrigydrudion.

Pembrokeshire has seen 68 public buildings upgraded, including in Haverfordwest, Milford Haven, Pembroke Dock and Tenby, and 75 sites in rural areas across Wales have also been switched on including near Welshpool, Bangor and St Davids.

The investment is just one way the UK government is improving connectivity in Wales. Last year ministers announced up to 234,000 rural premises in Wales could be in scope for a broadband upgrade via Project Gigabit: a £5 billion programme that is prioritising the most hard-to-reach areas for upgrades fast

enough to support even the most data-intensive technologies such as 8k video streaming and virtual reality gaming.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

“ This is a significant step that will make so many people’s lives easier in Wales.

“ Every day increasingly more public services are being delivered online. The investment of £11.5m from the UK Government to improve connectivity means the public will have better access to these services which will be faster and more efficient.

“ And for those who do the vital work in these locations such as GP surgeries, day care centres and libraries – they will notice a transformation which will allow them to deliver their important work with greater ease.

“ The UK Government is continuing to deliver on the peoples’ priorities in Wales.” Many sites in Wales are already feeling the benefits. Anchorage Social Activity Centre, a day centre at Pembroke Dock, works with people with learning disabilities or dementia. Thanks to the upgrade, internet speeds have risen from two megabits per second to 80 megabits per second.

The broadband boost has enabled groups to engage with the benefits of a digital therapy system involving a large touch-screen loaded with materials to improve mood and wellbeing, including music therapy, interactive games, pictures and BBC archive clips. Two Alexas have been ordered for the site, which will be used for music-based activities, and there are plans to link digitally with leisure and library services.

Senior Team Co-ordinator at Anchorage Social Activity Centre Esther Gray said:

“ Fibre has given us the speeds to work more effectively and there are no more spinning circles while we wait for things to load. This has given an additional push to reinvent our service and move forwards.

“ We did not really do much with IT before the pandemic but with the enthusiasm of our staff and the upgrade to fibre we can continue to build on that. Faster speeds are vital to us going forwards.”

At Milford Haven Library, connection speeds have rocketed from a sluggish four megabits per second to 150 megabits per second. Members of the public have access to 17 public computers and free WiFi, and the gigabit-capable service has put an end to complaints about a slow network.

Site Coordinator at Milford Haven Library Tracy Collins said:

“ A lot of members of the public come in to use the computers for job searches. People used to say that the internet was very slow, especially when they were downloading documents and we would have to say sorry but there was nothing we could do about it. It’s been great so far, this is a big step forward.”

ENDS

The upgrades were delivered via the Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) programme to help roll out the next generation of faster, full fibre broadband connections to eligible public buildings and the Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) Hubs programme to deliver nationwide gigabit-capable connections in locations that are unlikely to benefit from commercial investment.

LFFN & RGC Hub Projects – Details

Cardiff Capital Region LFFN Project	Delivered by the Welsh Government, working with the ten local authorities that make up the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. £2.5m UK funding, 166 public sites.
Pembrokeshire County Council LFFN Public Sector Project	Delivered by Pembrokeshire County Council. £1m UK funding, 68 public sites.
North Wales LFFN Challenge Fund Project	Denbighshire-led, working with the six local authorities that make up the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. £6.5m UK funding, 311 public sites.
RGC Hub – Rest of Wales Project	Delivered by the Welsh Government, working with 11 rural local authorities in Wales. £0.93m UK funding, 75 public sites.

Site breakdown

Pembrokeshire site breakdown (68):

Crymych – 2 Fishguard – 4 Haverfordwest – 22 Kilgetty – 1 Milford Haven – 11 Narberth – 2 Newport – 2 Pembroke – 2 Pembroke Dock – 11 Saundersfoot – 3 Templeton – 1 Tenby – 7

North Wales site breakdown (311):

Abergele – 6 Amlwch – 1 Bangor – 8 Barmouth – 2 Beaumaris – 1 Betws-y-Coed – 5 Blaenau Ffestiniog – 2 Bodorgan – 1 Caernarfon – 10 Cemaes Bay – 1 Cerrigydrudion – 11 Chester – 3 Colwyn Bay – 16 Conwy – 5 Deeside – 11 Denbigh – 13 Dolgellau – 6 Dolwyddelan – 1 Flint – 4 Harlech – 2 Holyhead – 9 Holywell – 6 Llandudno – 14 Llangefni – 5 Llanerchymedd – 1 Llanfairfechan – 3 Llangollen – 7 Llanidloes – 1 Llanrwst – 6 Llanfair Pwllgwyngyll – 2 Menai Bridge – 1 Mold – 14 Penmaenmawr – 1 Penrhyndeudraeth – 1 Porthmadog – 5 Prestatyn – 3 Pwllheli – 8 Rhuddlan & Rhyl – 27 Ruthin – 16 Star Gaerwen – 1 St Asaph – 6 Trefriw – 2 Tywyn – 2 Ty Goes – 1 Wrexham – 60

Cardiff City Region site breakdown (166):

Aberdare – 2 Abergavenny – 4 Abertillery – 9 Bangoed – 6 Blackwood – 3 Bridgend – 18 Caerphilly – 13 Caldicot – 4 Cardiff – 12 Chepstow – 2 Cwmbran – 8 Ebbw Vale – 7 Ferndale – 4 Hengoed – 2 Maesteg – 3 Merthyr Tydfil – 1 Monmouth – 3 Mountain Ash – 2 Newport – 26 Penarth – 2 Pontypool – 11 Pontypridd – 10 Tredegar – 8 Treharris – 1 Treorchy – 2 Usk – 3

Rest of Wales site breakdown (75)

Hereford – 1 Llandrindod – 1 Brecon – 4 Llanwrtyd – 2 Knighton – 1 Presteigne – 1 Llangollen – 1 Corwen – 4 Betws y Coed – 1 Llanrwst – 1 Conwy – 2 Dolgellau – 2 Blaenau Ffestiniog – 1 Barmouth – 1 Porthmadog – 1 Caernarfon – 2 Bangor – 1 Menai Bridge – 1 Rhosneigr – 1 Amlwch – 1 Benllech – 2 Gors Felin – 1 Glynneath – 2 Gwaun Cae – 2 Meddygfa – 2 Swansea – 3 Whitland – 2 Newcastle Emlyn – 2 Llanybydder – 1 Cardigan – 4 Lampeter – 1 St Davids – 2 Narberth – 1 Tenby – 2 Pembroke – 3 Montgomery – 1 Llanidloes – 2 Machynilleth – 2 Welshpool – 5 Llanfyllin – 2 Aberystwyth – 3 Tregaron – 1

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss' speech at the Atlantic Council Annual Makins Lecture

Well thank you Ambassador, and thank you to the Atlantic Council for hosting this event at this very important time.

In the late 1990's I worked for Shell, where one of my first roles was a ship refurbishment project in Norfolk, Virginia, just south of here.

And I was overseeing two LNG vessels that had been mothballed due to lack of demand. Back then in the oil industry we were modelling oil prices at \$10 a barrel – today it is heading towards \$200 a barrel.

It feels like a different world.

We thought that energy crises, expansionism and geopolitical strife were behind us.

We thought that peace and stability were inevitable – not something that we had to work and invest in.

Now those illusions have been shattered.

And we are paying the price for those years of complacency.

Russia built its capabilities in plain sight, violating its commitments and acting with impunity – in Georgia, in Crimea and beyond.

We knew what Putin was doing.

We had the intelligence and Putin announced his designs on Ukraine in public.

He set his intentions down in black and white and put them up on the Kremlin website. But it was difficult for any of us to believe.

Well, we believe it now.

The world has woken up.

And the era of complacency is over.

We must rise to this moment.

We must pledge that never again will we allow such aggression to go unchecked.

This means acting now. It means being tough – because we know the costs will rise if we don't.

The public understand the gravity of this moment.

They see the terrible suffering caused by this barbaric and illegal invasion against a European democracy and they recognise that the world has changed.

Putin has launched a full-frontal assault not just on the Ukrainian people, but also on the very foundation of our societies and the rules by which we coexist – sovereignty, democracy, the UN Charter.

He has shaken the architecture of global security.

The invasion of Ukraine is a paradigm shift on the scale of 9/11.

And how we respond today will set the pattern for this new era.

If we let Putin's expansionism go unchallenged it would send a dangerous message to would-be aggressors and authoritarians around the world. And we simply can't allow that to happen.

We have to start with the principle that the only thing aggressors understand is strength.

And we must work together to ensure that Putin loses in Ukraine.

Putin thought that his tanks would roll into Kyiv at will.

Instead, he has faced fierce, organised and tenacious resistance.

At Hostomel Airport, in Kharkiv, in Mariupol and beyond, new chapters have been written in the history of valour.

I pay tribute to the bravery of the Ukrainian people and to President Zelensky's remarkable leadership.

Putin also expected the world to be slow and to be divided.

Instead, he has been met with a resurgence of political unity and strength.

In the UN General Assembly 141 countries voted to condemn Russia's actions.

Putin's only supporters were Syria, Eritrea, Belarus and North Korea.

Never did we think that the great nation of Russia would be reduced to this – aside from Eritrea, its only allies are now a vassal state, a rogue state, and a war criminal.

Putin is shunned and isolated. He has made his country a global pariah.

As things get tougher in Ukraine, we will continue to increase our support.

The UK was the first European country to send lethal military aid to Ukraine and we are a top humanitarian donor.

The United States, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Poland, the EU and others have also stepped up.

Our coordinated sanctions were unprecedented and they were overwhelming – cutting off funding for Putin's war machine and putting him under growing pressure at home.

The fact that the UK, US, EU, Japan and Canada moved in unison gave this action incredible scale.

It has been truly global.

Even Switzerland has put aside its historic neutrality.

Singapore has imposed bilateral sanctions for the first time since the 1970's.

And in the United Kingdom we have put in place the toughest package of sanctions in our history, hitting over 200 individuals, entities and subsidiaries, including Putin himself.

We've hit £300 billion worth of Russian bank assets – more than any other nation.

And this week we changed the law in the United Kingdom to allow us to take even tougher action against oligarchs and others around Putin.

Today we have sanctioned Roman Abramovich and other major oligarchs, showing that we will act without fear and without favour.

This effort has been phenomenal, and it has been united. We have done a huge amount.

But let me be clear – we are still not doing enough.

We must double down and we have to ramp up the global pressure on Putin.

We have to go further on sanctions to tighten the vice– including a full SWIFT ban, freezing all Russian bank assets, and encouraging more countries to join the effort.

We want a situation where they can't access their funds, they can't clear their payments, their trade can't flow, their ships can't dock and their planes can't land.

And we must work together to ensure justice is done at the ICC and Putin is held to account for his appalling actions.

And we must do more to deliver defensive weapons and respond to the growing humanitarian emergency.

We will do all of this. And we will shape this new global era for global security.

If we are to persuade Putin and future Putins that we are serious, we need to do things differently.

First of all, we must end the strategic dependence which puts our economies and security at the risk and mercy of malign actors.

Europe remains deeply reliant on Russian energy. This provides a vital source of revenue for Putin – and it must end.

Together with the United States we announced that we will phase out Russian oil imports.

And I welcome the EU's plan to cut its imports of Russian gas by two thirds this year.

We are working with our G-7 partners to cut this dependence once and for all, to put a ceiling on the percentage of Russian energy imports and committing to bring it down over time.

And we need to look at how we can help those countries especially dependent on Russian energy, and how we can increase supplies elsewhere.

This will require shared commitment, over time.

And it will require greater energy investment in new infrastructure, and for producers to be willing to export more.

I applaud President Biden's commitment to release 30 million barrels from the US Reserve.

But we must also look at other areas of dependence.

Whether it's minerals or rare earth metals, we should work to prevent future problems before they emerge.

Secondly, we need to strengthen our deterrence.

In the UK we significantly increased our defence spending last year, ready for this more competitive age, recognising Russia as the most acute threat.

We are NATO's biggest contributor in Europe.

And we are doubling the number of UK troops in Estonia and Poland.

The United States continues to lead the way on spending in NATO. And others are stepping up – we are seeing a real unity of purpose.

I applaud Germany's historic decision to up its military spending.

But the fact is we all need to go further.

Many countries still aren't meeting their target of spending 2% of GDP on defence.

And let's be clear – that is a minimum.

In the Cold War we were spending far more – upwards of 5%.

We should be ready to do whatever it takes to respond to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

We must redouble our efforts to strengthen NATO's eastern flank.

We have to support non-NATO countries that could be the next target of Putin's aggression – like our friends in the Caucasus and the Western Balkans.

And we must deepen our partnerships in other areas – like AUKUS, our trilateral partnership with Australia, or our work with Canada and others to boost security in the Arctic Circle.

The NATO Strategic Concept and the US National Security Strategy will be vital in pointing the way forward.

We need to ensure that our global security architecture is fit for the new era.

And we must lead a new global consensus where the rules are weakest – in technology, in space and cyber space.

And we have to reinforce and globalize our arms control regimes.

We don't know where the next threat may arise – and we know that conflict anywhere threatens security everywhere.

Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security are indivisible.

China looms large over this debate.

Beijing is increasing its assertiveness and expanding its armed forces at breakneck speed.

They claim a policy of non-interference.

They claim to respect sovereignty and have refused to support Russia's aggression at the UN.

We want to see them follow through on those claims.

Thirdly, we need to develop stronger alliances around the world.

The UK is deepening our global economic, diplomatic and security ties. And we need to see the entire free world reach out.

We are rallying those 141 countries that voted to condemn Russia's actions in the UN, and we're persuading those that abstained to toughen their resolve.

We need to draw more countries into the orbit of those who are prepared to stand up for sovereignty.

In the past we have neglected the strategic importance of some of these countries – including partners in the Indo-Pacific, Africa and the Gulf.

They want alternatives to working with authoritarian regimes who load their balance sheets with debt.

So we have to provide an alternative through British International Investment, America's initiative, Build Back Better World, and other initiatives from like-minded partners.

And we shouldn't let anything detract from our unity.

That's why we must fix the problems of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

All of the signatories of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement share a commitment to peace and stability in Northern Ireland. The UK is firmly opposed to a hard border.

The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement protects East-West ties as well as North South ties.

At present, however, the protocol is creating an imbalance between communities.

The UK has put forward proposals to enable free trade to flow within the UK at the same time as protecting the EU's Single Market.

Our objective is that the Protocol can enjoy the support of all communities and ensure that the democratic institutions of Northern Ireland can function.

And we will need increased political will on all sides to make that happen – and pragmatism from the EU.

I want us all to work together to resolve our differences and to be focused on the threats that we face, the immediate threats to European stability and security.

Our ultimate aim – working with all our allies – is to make the world safe for freedom and democracy.

The transatlantic relationship is vital here.

Britain and America have always been at the centre of European and global security – at the centre of a strong G7 with our friends in the EU, Canada, and Japan.

We stand together to face down aggression around the world – from the South China Sea to Eastern Europe.

President Biden and Prime Minister Johnson are seized of this task.

That's why in Cornwall last year, they signed the New Atlantic Charter.

They promised to renew the architecture of international cooperation for the 21st century.

And they pledged to stand up for democracy, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Putin should take note.

We will not rest until he fails in Ukraine and the country's sovereignty is restored.

Putin must lose, because the consequences if he doesn't are huge.

So we will keep strengthening our response, replacing doubt with determination, and complacency with conviction.

We must never let our guard down again.

We will be tough – not because we want conflict, but because we want to prevent it.

Be tough, get peace.

In this new era for global security, let that be our rallying call.

Thank you.

[Anne-Marie Trevelyan delivers keynote speech on maritime trade at 2022 Maritime UK Awards in Glasgow](#)

Many thanks for that kind introduction and good evening everyone.

It's a huge pleasure to be back here in Glasgow for the Maritime UK Awards just months after I last visited this wonderful city for the historic COP26

climate change conference, where seaborne trade was a hot topic for discussion.

And where better to celebrate the world-class excellence of the UK's maritime industry and shine a spotlight on our ambitions for the future than here on the banks of the River Clyde?

This great cradle of shipbuilding innovation is the birthplace of some of the world's fastest, largest and most iconic vessels.

From the powerful battleships that have spearheaded the Royal Navy down the years – with wonderful names like HMS Colossus, HMS Tiger and HMS Repulse, to luxury ocean liners such as RMS Queen Elizabeth and the QE2 that have showcased British shipbuilding prowess globally, to the thousands of cargo vessels that have connected these islands with far-flung markets overseas and kept the arteries of global trade flowing.

'Clydeside built' is shorthand worldwide for precision marine engineering at its very best.

And as the United Kingdom charts a new course for herself as an independent trading nation once again, maritime businesses based here on Clydeside, and our other great maritime hubs across the United Kingdom will be crucial to driving the Global Britain we are building towards as we go full steam ahead into our 21st-century trading successes.

This industry is helping forge new ties for British trade across the oceans as we bring down barriers to global commerce and deliver the benefits of free trade and open markets to every region of the UK, levelling up our country.

And it is providing the steel behind our maritime security in an increasingly uncertain world.

With the Royal Navy's two Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers, built in Roysth playing a vital role in keeping global sea lanes open and safe for British shipping, and indeed this week now both out on operations protecting our friends and allies.

Indeed, before the Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine that same shipyard had won a contract to construct fast missile boats for the Ukrainian navy with £1.7bn of support from our export credits agency UKEF to supply its Arrowhead 140 frigate design to Poland as part of that country's Miecznik naval programme, working successfully together with Thales UK, MDBA UK and the UK government during the procurement campaign.

These projects are critical as we watch evolving security challenges which the world faces, and remind us that to keep trade flowing and nations' maritime borders safe, modern ships and their defences are vital.

Our maritime sector is pivotal to our prosperity here at home too – bringing £17 billion into our economy and directly supporting 220,000 British jobs.

We boast world-class excellence in areas such as marine equipment and

systems, autonomous vessels and marine science.

As shown by the superb products and services of the companies that have been recognised for their work here this evening.

Excellence from Actisense, CyberOwl and Babcock LGE which are shortlisted for the Maritime UK export award.

The potential for trade-led growth in this sector is huge, with my department predicting new global and civil maritime export opportunities worth hundreds of millions of pounds over the next five years.

Opportunities that I am determined to help British firms harness.

Not least through the free trade agreements we are signing with our global partners.

Deals that we have agreed with 70 countries plus the EU so far, accounting for more than £770bn-worth of UK trade.

Giving British firms freer and fairer access to key global markets, from Japan, to Australia to Singapore – with more in the pipeline.

But as we all know the demands of global trade are changing fast and we must work together to adapt quickly or risk being left stranded in the wake of our competitors.

Nowhere more so than in the transition to zero-carbon shipping – as the race to develop the green vessels of the future speeds up.

Where once we produced the world's biggest and most powerful vessels, now we must lead the charge in building the greenest and most technologically advanced.

Fuelled by our leading British resources, skills and expertise in this field as we strive to meet the long-term temperature goals set out by the Paris Agreement and support the International Maritime Organization's target of reducing Green House Gas emissions from shipping by at least 50% by 2050.

As we work to build a cleaner, greener, more sustainable maritime trade network that is fit for the world of tomorrow.

This is not just an economic necessity it is an existential one for our planet.

And one of my top priorities as Secretary of State for International Trade.

After all it was here in Glasgow during COP26 where the United Kingdom, alongside our global partners, signed the Clydebank Declaration committing ourselves to establishing at least six zero-emissions, green shipping corridors by the middle of this decade.

We are making progress in this field, with British maritime firms already

engaged in creating game-changing green tech solutions.

Innovative companies such as Silverstream Technologies, the British manufacturer of a revolutionary, efficiency-boosting air lubrication system which DIT has supported in exporting to China.

But we know we must go further and faster in harnessing the benefits of this maritime transformation, keeping Britain ahead of the game.

My department is helping unlock this potential through our Green Shipbuilding Export Campaign which covers the full spectrum of maritime technologies, combining the resources of DIT's civil and defence sales team in identifying and developing green export opportunities worldwide and giving British businesses a competitive advantage through early intelligence and market analysis while promoting this country's green maritime capabilities to international buyers.

We are currently carrying out detailed scoping exercises across the globe to give us the information we need to corner this market.

Bringing more specialists from across industry on board to help drive progress towards this goal.

We are working to unlock the benefits of maritime trade across the board, built upon the bedrock of our Maritime Trade and Investment five-year plan, which was developed in close partnership with Maritime UK and aims to increase Britain's global market share and make this country the destination of choice for maritime investment.

And I am pleased to announce tonight the launch of our new Maritime Capability Campaign Office which will supercharge this work.

As set out in the Board of Trade's new policy paper on the future of UK maritime trade, this influential new office will sit within my department – bringing together our defence and civil maritime capabilities into a larger single unit as we seek to land a greater share of this crucial global market.

It will build a portfolio of high-quality maritime trading opportunities for British firms to embrace utilising the UK's key strengths, such as our world-class defence and security export capabilities and our leadership in low carbon technologies

And it will work with the National Shipbuilding Office to develop an innovative and competitive British maritime offer for investors using data-driven analysis to outmanoeuvre our international competitors.

This work will be supported by UKEF whose job it is to ensure that no viable UK export fails through lack of finance, helping British firms of all kinds and all sizes to take their first step into global trade.

Britain's maritime industry will also be energised by the launch of our refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy. This refresh aims to spur greater productivity in the UK's shipyards, strengthen local manufacturers in the

supply chain and blaze a trail in technological and environmental innovation.

This includes setting out a 30 Year Cross-Government Shipbuilding Pipeline to give greater long-term clarity on public sector orders, investing more than £200m in a new UK Shipping Office for Reducing Emissions – UK-SHORE – to help fund green research and innovation and bringing the work of government, devolved administrations, industry and training providers across the UK together under the UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce to supply maritime businesses with the qualified workers they need to thrive.

Meanwhile, DIT's international network of trade advisors is working hard to connect British maritime manufacturers and suppliers with opportunities overseas, helping our firms to navigate sometimes choppy trading waters in lucrative foreign markets and providing them with expert in-country sector and market-specific intelligence.

While our GREAT UK marketing team is helping maritime businesses to showcase their expertise worldwide at major global trade shows such as Asia-Pacific Maritime in Singapore later this month, Nor-shipping in Oslo in April and Posidonia 2022 in Athens in June.

So as we set sail on a new voyage as a sovereign trading nation, for British trade it is vital that our maritime industry is fighting fit to surf the economic waves of the future. We must be strong enough to ride the powerful trading currents of a fast-changing world, which is why we are putting the resources and expertise in place to help British businesses embrace the opportunities that lie ahead and opening the door to trade even wider for firms from across this industry, based here on the Clyde and around our United Kingdom.

As we build a greener, more productive and more technologically advanced British maritime industry – forging a bigger, bolder, brighter trading future for our country that is founded upon our seaborne strength – and cement Britain's place as one of the great cradles of maritime progress for generations to come.