

[News story: Refurbished homes for sailors at HMNB Clyde](#)

The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) led the £1.5 million refurbishment at Bannachra Drive in Helensburgh, which will help improve the lives of Royal Navy families already living in the area, and of some of the hundreds of families expected to move to the vicinity when the base becomes the Submarine Centre of Specialisation.

From 2020 HM Naval Base Clyde will host all of the Royal Navy's hunter killer submarines and will be the future home of the Dreadnought class of nuclear deterrent submarines. The MOD is investing hundreds of millions of pounds in developing HMNB Clyde, with the construction phases of the work expected to support a further 1,000 contractor jobs.

The development of the site will see the number employed rise from the current figure of 6,800 to an eventual population of 8,500, with up to 1,400 Royal Navy submariners moving to the area from Plymouth. In the future all submariners will expect to serve their entire career at HM Naval Base Clyde, ensuring greater harmony and stability for them and their families. The refurbishment of these 34 family homes also contributes to the joint Royal Navy and Argyll and Bute Council strategy to align the development of the naval base with local needs such as planning and transport.

The extensive upgrade work at Bannachra, which was carried out by Amey and contractor Bells Ltd, included the fitting of new roofs, windows and doors, as well as new boilers, external wall insulation and rendering of the buildings. Work was also undertaken to replace fencing and gates and rain water goods, with chimneys on the properties also removed and garage roofs replaced.

Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell was there to witness the completion of the refurbishment work on August 28, joined by Air Commodore Wendy Rothery, DIO's Head of Accommodation, and Captain Craig Mearns, HMNB Clyde's Captain of the Base.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

The work of the HM Naval Base Clyde team demonstrates clearly how Scotland benefits from the UK's armed forces, and how our military contributes to the safety and prosperity of Scotland. HM Naval Base Clyde makes a huge contribution to the local area, providing skilled jobs, supporting the local economy and contributing to regeneration. This project, which will improve service families' accommodation, is a great example of that strong partnership with the local community in action.

Commenting on the work, Air Commodore Rothery said:

The refurbishment of these houses is a prime example of how DIO provides vital support to the Armed Forces. This upgrade work will make a real difference to the quality of life of our Royal Navy personnel and their families. We are grateful to all the residents for their patience with the inevitable disruption caused by the work, and we hope they are very happy with the results.

In February 2017 the Naval Base, UK government and local authority Argyll and Bute signed a unique agreement committing the parties to work together to ensure that investment in the military site benefited the growth and regeneration of the wider community. The Strategic Defence Delivery Framework agreement, as it is known, is aimed at delivering new housing and improved infrastructure, ensuring that both the Service community and people living in Argyll and Bute benefit directly from hosting the base.

Captain Craig Mearns, HMNB Clyde's Captain of the Base, said:

The Naval Base Command is delighted to see completion of this Service Family Accommodation refurbishment project.

The expansion of activity at Clyde and growth of our Service population over the next few years means that we need to make best use of all available accommodation. It is important that what we have to offer is of a high standard, not only because that is what our people deserve, but also because we aim to encourage an increasing number of Service families to relocate to this area. The offer of good housing, coupled with the excellent amenities and quality of life on offer here, are significant attractions for those considering such a move.

[News story: British-armed F-35B Lightning jet takes to the skies](#)

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew revealed that a British F-35 Lightning jet reached the landmark milestone whilst he was on a visit to the Defence Electronics and Components Agency (DECA) in Wales.

The Welsh site is set to become a global repair hub for the cutting-edge aircraft, providing crucial maintenance, repair, overhaul and upgrade services for F-35 avionics, electronic and electrical components, fuel, mechanical and hydraulic systems.

The jet, which was flown by a British pilot from RAF 17 Squadron, took to the

skies from Edwards Air Force base in southern California for the momentous flight carrying ASRAAM air-to-air missiles.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

The F-35 Lightning fleet has moved another step closer to defending the skies and supporting our illustrious aircraft carriers with this landmark flight. Exceptional engineering from the UK is not only helping to build what is the world's most advanced fighter jet, but is also ensuring that it is equipped with the very best firepower.

This flight by a British pilot, in a British F-35 jet with British-built weapons is a symbol of the major part we are playing in what is the world's biggest ever defence programme, delivering billions for our economy and a game-changing capability for our Armed Forces.



British-armed F-35B Lightning jet takes to the skies. Copyright Lockheed Martin US.

The trials were the first-time UK weapons have flown on a British F-35, and represent a key part of the work-up towards Initial Operating Capability in December.

The ASRAAM missiles, built by MBDA in Bolton, are just some of the essential parts the UK is supplying the F-35 programme. ASRAAM stands for 'Advanced

Short Range Air-to-Air Missile'. The missiles will enable pilots to engage and defend themselves against other aircraft ranging in size from large multi-engine aircraft to small drones.

British companies are building 15% by value of all 3,000 F-35s planned for production. It is projected that around £35 billion will be contributed to the UK economy through the programme, with around 25,000 British jobs also being supported.

The F-35B Lightning multi-role fighter jet is the first to combine radar evading stealth technology with supersonic speeds and short take-off and vertical landing capability.

The fighter jets will be jointly manned by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy and can operate from land and sea, forming a vital part of Carrier Strike when operating from the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers.

617 Squadron, based at RAF Marham, will carry out their own weaponry flights in the next few months.



British-armed F-35B Lightning jet takes to the skies. Copyright Lockheed Martin US.

[News story: UK Military Train 500 Somalians](#)

British personnel have been delivering training to the Somalian National Army (SNA) since January 2017, focussing on medical training, leadership development, intelligence, equipment care, logistics and human rights.

Armed Forces Minister Mark Lancaster said:

The training we have provided will help build a more stable and prosperous Somalia.

The Somalian National Army have been motivated, keen to learn and professional and we remain committed to their country's development.

The long-term aim of the programme is for Commanding Officers in the SNA to take what they have learned and become self-sufficient in training their own troops.

This training forms just part of the UK's work in the country, the UK is also the third-largest donor to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

In 2017, it was announced that Somalia would be the beneficiary of £21million in additional backing from the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund.

The UK is also supporting the development of a joint funding mechanism for policing, which we have developed jointly with the EU.

[Press release: Space sector to benefit from multi-million pound work on UK alternative to Galileo](#)

- Government to invest £92 million of Brexit readiness money on plans for independent satellite system
- 18-month study will look at the design and development of UK programme
- This will inform the decision to create the system as an alternative to Galileo
- The UK Space Agency will lead the work with full support from the

Ministry of Defence

The money has been allocated from the £3 billion Brexit readiness fund announced at last year's Budget and will be rolled out over the coming months.

Satellite navigation systems like GPS are increasingly important for commercial, military and other critical applications, from guiding aircraft, ships and emergency services to helping millions of people find their way on car journeys. A recent government study estimated that sustained disruption to satellite navigation would cost the UK economy £1 billion per day.

The government has been clear that the UK wants to remain involved in the Galileo programme, and is negotiating with the European Commission to this end.

But without the assurance that UK industry can collaborate on an equal basis now and in the future, and without access to the necessary security-related information to rely on Galileo for military functions such as missile guidance, the UK would be obliged to end its participation in the project.

The UK Space Agency is leading this phase of the work to look at options for a British Global Navigation Satellite System, which would fully meet UK security requirements and support the UK's sovereign space and cryptography sectors. This significant new investment will develop specific technical proposals with the Ministry of Defence playing a full role in support.

The 18-month engineering, design and development project will deliver a detailed technical assessment and schedule of a UK global positioning system.

This would provide both civilian and encrypted signals and be compatible with the US GPS system.

UK industry has been instrumental in developing Galileo technology and encryption, and this experience will be used in developing the alternative, with a number of multi-million-pound contracts available for British space companies.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

"Britain is a world leader in the space industry and satellites. We are investing in an alternative option to Galileo to ensure our future security needs are met using the UK's world-leading space sector.

"Our position on Galileo has been consistent and clear. We have repeatedly highlighted the specialist expertise we bring to the project and the risks in time delays and cost increases that the European Commission is taking by excluding UK industry.

"Britain has the skills, expertise and commitment to create our own sovereign satellite system and I am determined that we take full advantage of the opportunities this brings, backed by our modern Industrial Strategy."

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

“The danger space poses as a new front for warfare is one of my personal priorities, and it is absolutely right that we waste no time in going it alone if we need an independent satellite system to combat those emerging threats. This alternative system and the UK’s very first Defence Space Strategy which I will launch later this year will be a further boost to military skills, our innovative businesses and our genuinely world-leading role which has seen us make such a key contribution to Galileo.”

Dr Graham Turnock, CEO of UK Space Agency said:

“We remain confident in the strength of our space sector and look forward to working in partnership with them on the exciting prospect of a national satellite navigation system.”

Even if the decision was taken not to create a UK independent satellite system and the UK remained a full member of Galileo post-Brexit, this work would support UK jobs and expertise in areas including spacecraft and antenna design, satellite control systems, cryptography and cyber security. It will also support the UK’s growing space sector.

Growing space sector

Britain’s space industry is going from strength to strength. Last week (22 August) the European Space Agency’s (ESA) revolutionary British-built wind measuring spacecraft Aeolus was launched. The spacecraft was built by Airbus Defence and Space in Stevenage and other British businesses provided critical elements to the mission, including a camera, software and propulsion systems.

At the Farnborough International Airshow in July, the government committed £31.5m to support the development of a spaceport in Sutherland in Scotland and commercial operations from the site, which could be the first in Europe and will see rockets lift off from UK soil.

Horizontal launch sites also have significant potential in a future UK spaceflight market, which could attract companies from all over the world to invest in Britain. Sites such as Newquay, Glasgow Prestwick and Snowdonia will be boosted by an additional £2m fund to grow their sub-orbital flight, satellite launch and spaceplane ambitions.

Low cost access to space is important for the UK’s thriving space sector which builds more small satellites than any other country, with Glasgow building more than any other city in Europe.

The UK Space Agency is driving the growth of the space sector as part of the Government’s Industrial Strategy with major initiatives including the £99m National Space Test Facility at Harwell, and the UK continues to be a leading member of ESA, which is independent of the EU.

[News story: Uk gifts historic SS Mendi Bell from WW1 to South Africa](#)

Updated: Updated image.

Prime Minister Theresa May presented the bell to South African president Cyril Ramaphosa as an example of the shared heritage that underpins the close relationship between the two nations.

The sinking of the SS Mendi in the English Channel on 21 February 1917, a disaster that resulted in the loss of 616 South Africans, is a significant historical moment in the country's history. It is commemorated by South African Armed Forces Day held on the date of the disaster and commonly referred to as Mendi day.