



Ministry
of Defence

JEREMY QUIN MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT



MSU/4/5/2/8/is

13 June 2022

Dear Tobias,

Thank you for your letter of 19 April, regarding the Department's response to the HCDC's report "we are going to need a bigger Navy". Please find below responses to your additional questions.

Question 1:

"The timings given in the response for the Type 45 PIPs add to our concern that the programme is slipping. For two ships the length of the programme has been extended beyond 12 months...Since that response, the Government has said it is now looking at accelerating the programme....Does this mean a change to the predicted timings for the PIP given in the response? What other options are the Government and industry considering to address the industrial capacity issues that were identified in the response as a constraint on the PIP programme?"

Since our response to your report, good progress has been made on the Type 45 Power and Improvement Project (PIP). HMS DAUNTLESS has successfully completed PIP harbour integration trials at Cammell Laird and is on schedule to sail for sea trials in June 2022. HMS DARING's PIP conversion is making progress at Cammell Laird and is forecast to complete by December 2022. HMS DARING will then be towed to Portsmouth and go into dock for planned maintenance and recertification.

HMS DRAGON's PIP conversion will take place concurrently with her upkeep period in Portsmouth, which commenced in March. Conducting these two PIP streams concurrently in Cammell Laird and Portsmouth will help maintain the programme.

The Department is assessing options to accelerate the programme to complete PIP as early as possible, before 2028. This needs to be balanced against the Royal Navy's current and future operational commitments, as choices to accelerate PIP by advancing ship conversions will impact Type 45 class availability in the short term.

The Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP
Chair, Defence Committee
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London
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Any changes to the schedule will also be subject to commercial negotiations with BAE systems as the prime contractor.

Type 45 Destroyer availability continues to meet Defence's operational requirements. HMS DIAMOND recently deployed to the Mediterranean on NATO duties and HMS DEFENDER participated in Exercise COLD RESPONSE in the High North. HMS DUNCAN has also commenced sea trials following a refit period which did not include a PIP conversion.

Question 2:

"The statement in the response that "discussions on the procurement of any interim Surface to Surface Guided Weapon capability before the introduction of FC/CASW will be given all necessary scrutiny" contradicts reports in the press that the Government has issued a notice to industry that this programme has been cancelled. **Can you confirm the status of this programme and how the Royal Navy will counter enemy vessels in roughly the next 10 years until FC/ASW is planned for availability?"**

On 7 February 2022, a notification was issued to Industry that the interim Surface to Surface Guided Weapon Competition had been cancelled. This programme was restricted to fielding a small number of missiles, to no more than three Type 23 frigates at any one time and its cancellation allowed resource to be directed towards other related capability priorities that will increase the lethality of the Royal Navy and enable more opportunities for capability growth. There is no doubt that there is a requirement for surface-to-surface lethality and the Royal Navy remains active in examining the opportunities across the spectrum of offensive strike weapons in the near term, given rapid development in this area of maritime technology.

Longer term, the Royal Navy remains committed to developing and delivering the next generation of offensive strike weapons, capable of striking surface ships via the Future Cruise/Anti-Ship Weapon (FC/ASW) programme, of which the Royal Navy's Future Offensive Surface Weapon (FOSuW) requirement is a key part. This will deliver peer-level capabilities with significantly enhanced ranges, effects, and survivability over existing weapon systems. We are also examining options to expand the number of platforms that FOSuW will support. However, in the period between the out of service date of our existing legacy Harpoon missiles in December 2023, and the introduction into service of the FC/ASW (FOSuW) weapons, notwithstanding our ongoing lethality programmes, the fleet will still be capable of fielding a powerful mix of offensive capabilities that can strike enemy vessels at sea, such as the use of the Common Anti-Air Modular Missile-Maritime (Camm-M) in anti-surface mode, Sea Martlet and Sea Venom missiles launched from maritime helicopters and Spearfish heavyweight torpedoes fired from our attack submarines.

Question 3:

“The commitment to maintaining and modernising the UK’s amphibious capabilities is welcome. Can you clarify when the LPD and LSD(A)s are due out of service and what level of availability the Navy is targeting for the MRSS when they enter service?”

The RN’s three Landing Ship Dock (Auxiliary) (LSD(A)) and Landing Platform Dock (LPD) are due out of service early in the 2030s.

The Multi Role Support Ship (MRSS) is in the Pre-Concept Phase and is envisaged to provide an enduring solution to the Littoral Strike shipping requirement. MRSS will be procured under DE&S Availability Oriented Acquisition (AOA) strategy that will refocus acquisition on designing, contracting and delivering improved levels of availability and readiness, incentivising industry to maximise supportability - lowering build, support and operating costs, mitigating obsolescence, exploiting data and digital technologies and driving forward standardisation and commonality through concepts of modularity and interoperability.

The support solution will consider forward deployments where the platforms and systems may be supported and maintained in overseas support facilities and will utilise commercial best practices and equivalence where feasible. The expectation is that the MRSS will sustain a persistently engaged capability with a target of 80% availability through the Naval Support Integrated Global Network - a hybrid military / commercial model drawing on a global support and supply network, enabled by common digital architecture.

Question 4:

“Will RFA ARGUS’s retirement date be extended until the dedicated primary receiver MRSS is operational and will the MRSS be configured to offer the same level of casualty support as the ARGUS?”

Royal Fleet Auxiliary ARGUS will be extended in service beyond 2030.

Beyond ARGUS, the MRSS programme will offer an enduring solution to afloat medical support. The future Maritime Deployed Hospital Care (MDHC) capability hosted by the MRSS will be based around scale and effects required to support Littoral Strike. It is anticipated that this will be broadly equivalent to the level of capability that ARGUS currently provides now. Given there are planned to be more than one MRSS, there could be opportunities to disaggregate medical capability between multiple platforms, with an option to re-aggregate in time of crisis, rather than only operating a single platform. MRSS is still in the concept phase, and the precise laydown of the medical capability is still being developed.

Question 5:

“The response makes no mention of plans to engage with the Committee on the question of submarine availability. We would welcome any proposals you have to keep the Committee appropriately briefed on this issue to enable effective scrutiny to take place.

The Committee should be assured that initiatives have been instigated to improve access to docking, boat spares and to seek maintenance scheduling improvements. Measures continue to be pursued and are subject to significant oversight of both industry and Royal Navy performance targets. The Committee would also wish to be aware that a new Director Submarine position was stood up on 31 May with the express purpose of being a single Royal Navy pillar focussed on the generation and delivery of submarines, working closely with the Submarine Delivery Agency (SDA) and Defence Nuclear Organisation (DNO). Further details are available at SECRET or above classification.

The Department will, as outlined in our previous response, provide a single annual update to the Defence Committee to focus on Surface Fleet availability and shipbuilding plans. We recommend an annual update to the Committee in October 2022 so that we are sufficiently embedded into the financial year to offer an evidence based return, and strike the correct balance of reviewing the past and providing the Committee a sufficient look forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Quin', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

JEREMY QUIN MP