

Delayed £1.6bn shipbuilding deal 'must benefit UK economy'



Fleet Solid Support Contract Notice reveals ships delayed to 2032

GMB, the union for shipbuilding and ship repair workers, has called for a guarantee that the long-awaited Fleet Solid Support contract will be built in UK yards and use UK supply chains.

The call comes as the Ministry of Defence today [Friday 21 May 2021] **launched its Contract Notice for the supply vessels.**

The ships are needed to restock the UK's new carrier fleet on long distance operations. The original competition for the contract was cancelled in November 2019 amid fears that the order would be sent overseas.



However, the **Contract Notice reveals that the ships are now expected to be delivered in 2032 – compared to the original timetable of the mid-2020s.**

The Government has said that the successful bidder must be 'led by a British company,' but it has not said what proportion of the **value of the contract will be reserved for UK yards and suppliers.** [3]

GMB today said that the lack of clarity over the contract was undermining workers' confidence in the programme. Further delays would risk jobs and investment, the union said.

Ross Murdoch, GMB National Secretary and Maritime Chair of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, said:

'While the relaunch of this essential contract is welcome, today is also a missed opportunity.

'Our yards are crying out for work, and Ministers could have guaranteed that this £1.6 billion order would be used to boost the economy and deliver the next generation of apprenticeships.

'Instead, the Government is setting our yards against each other and leaving the door open to millions of pounds flowing overseas.

'Meanwhile, the contract is now delayed by up to seven years – risking jobs and investment.

'The Government must make best use of the specialised skills in UK yards by spreading the work, securing our vital defence manufacturing capabilities, and backing our world class shipbuilding industry.'

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