



National Shipbuilding Office

The National Shipbuilding Office Newsletter

Reflections on a milestone year

Welcome to the end of year edition of the National Shipbuilding Office (NSO) newsletter. The NSO team has been busy championing UK shipbuilding and building on past successes to ensure the industry continues to be recognised across Whitehall.

2025 has truly been a milestone year for the sector as the government moves forward with its plan to drive regional growth throughout the UK, having set out a new national Industrial Strategy, a Strategic Defence Review, and Defence Industrial Strategy.

This edition of the newsletter will focus on:

- NSO Action Plan forward look
- Pipeline developments
- NSO national skills survey
- Shipbuilding Skills Delivery Group work
- Centres of Excellence scheme update
- Maritime autonomy sector update
- Fresh investment in maritime infrastructure

Get in touch:

nso-secretariat@mod.gov.uk

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A message from our CEO

With the year drawing to a close, it is a good time to reflect. It is impossible to cover how much has happened. Progress with all our naval shipbuilding programmes, major export successes and in the pipeline, new civil ships like the new Mersey Ferry and wins across our supply chain.

Personally, I have valued time with our small and medium enterprises. I have been greatly impressed by their agility, innovation and pride in producing commercially competitive ships, components and technology.



This year has also seen the publication of a number of major Government strategies. Perhaps the most significant pivot is the First Sea Lord's ambition for the Hybrid Royal Navy. Looking ahead, publication of the Defence Investment Plan will provide greater clarity on where MOD will invest to provide our warfighters with the capability they need.

This newsletter highlights the development of our own Shipbuilding and Maritime Technology Action Plan which we intend to publish in Spring next year. The Plan will focus on actions that will meet the Government's ambitions for economic growth and our homeland and wider security needs.

The National Shipbuilding Office is now part of the National Armaments Directorate Group. This enables us to maximise our links to commercial, industrial, procurement, programme and export teams as well as new organisations like UK Defence Innovation. I hope you will continue to rely on the NSO, as your strategic industrial partner, to represent your challenges and support your opportunities.

As a team, the NSO has already built a good relationship with Luke Pollard, the new Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry, and hosted the first Small Ministerial Group on shipbuilding in October. Meanwhile, we continue to deepen our ties with departments including Business and Trade, Transport, Energy Security & Net Zero, Home Office, and Cabinet Office, ensuring we take a whole-of-government approach to strategy.

I would finally like to pay tribute to my team and just how much they deliver. We need to publicise more but a lot of what we do is not visible or showy. Sometimes it requires a thick skin and a motivation to get stuck in even when we are not wanted!

Wishing everyone a happy and restful festive period and I look forward to working with you all in 2026! – Rod Paterson



New NSO Action Plan set for spring 2026

In October, the Chancellor announced plans to go further and faster reforming the government's approach to procurement so that it can shape markets and manage demand. As part of this announcement, the Chancellor also committed to extending this approach to shipbuilding and maritime technology sectors, as part of the Action Plan for Shipbuilding and Maritime Technology.

The National Shipbuilding Office is now focused on the delivering this ambitious Action Plan by Spring 2026. This document will set out a bold vision for the UK's shipbuilding and maritime technology sector. Building on the Strategic Defence Review, the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy and the Defence Industrial Strategy, the Action Plan will align with national priorities in defence, growth and clean energy.

It will aim to:

- Support creation of high-skilled jobs
- Strengthen industrial resilience
- Foster innovation by removing barriers
- Support Small-to-Medium Enterprises
- Drive investment in cutting-edge technologies like maritime autonomy

Finally, the plan will set out how we will leverage procurement as a strategic tool and how we will ensure the shipbuilding and maritime technology sector is positioned to deliver long-term economic growth, national resilience, and global competitiveness.

We want to hear from you

- Via [email](#) to raise any issues you may be having
- Exhibiting at an event? Let us know and we would love to come and visit your stand
- Find shipbuilding government tenders [here](#), and get in touch with us for further information or advice

Type 26 Norway deal: A vote of confidence

The announcement that Norway had selected the UK's Type 26 design for its next series of frigates was truly a watershed moment for sovereign shipbuilding.

Worth £10 billion, the deal supports 4,000 jobs, with the programme expected to involve 432 businesses, including 222 SMEs. It is the largest British warship export deal by value in history and a clear vote of confidence in our maritime manufacturing capabilities.



Defence Secretary John Healey and his Norwegian counterpart sign the Type 26 agreement

Fleet Solid Support build begins



Defence Readiness and Industry Minister, Luke Pollard, attends the steel cut for RFA Resurgent

NSO CEO, Rod Paterson, joined Defence Minister Luke Pollard at the start of the month at Navantia UK's Appledore shipyard for the initial steel cutting ceremony for the first of the Royal Navy's new Fleet Solid Support ships – to be named RFA Resurgent.

The commencement of the build was a milestone moment after the NSO and government took decisive action last year to step in to help secure the future of all four Harland & Wolff shipyards in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Devon.

The wider Fleet Solid Support programme will see £115m invested, creating 1,200 jobs and recruiting 222 apprentices across four shipyards.

Spotlight on Skills



National
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Office

Supporting industry and business amid a challenging skills landscape is a key priority for the National Shipbuilding Office. That's why **we're launching a new national survey** and helping drive progress within the **Shipbuilding Skills Delivery Group**:

Announcing: Project Keel

The NSO has launched a new wide-reaching analysis of the UK shipbuilding sector, seeking input from workers and employers to assess how staff move between businesses and how this affects skills dependencies within the industry.

A [new website is now live](#) which contains a series of engagement exercises for workers of all different backgrounds, trades, and skills profiles within the sector to help better target policy interventions aimed at supporting skills.

Project Keel is being led by the NSO in partnership with start-up technology firm, Lorefully, and innovation agency, Connected Places Catapult, to directly engage with industry across all nations of the UK through a combination of surveys, interviews, and roundtable discussions.



[Read more on Lorefully's website](#)

New Directory for Centres of Excellence

NSO has worked with the Society of Maritime Industries and Centres of Excellence (CoE) to create a digital directory to increase visibility of existing CoEs, improve accessibility, and have clear points of contact for host organisations.

A CoE is a team, a shared facility or an entity focused on innovation and delivery by providing leadership, sharing best practices, conducting and sharing research, demonstrating capabilities, and offering support and/or training for a focus area of the shipbuilding enterprise.

The full directory will launch in early 2026, but a preview is available [here](#).

Updates from the Shipbuilding Skills Delivery Group:

IF YOU WERE an ENGINEER WHAT WOULD YOU DO?®

As part of the drive to change perceptions of Shipbuilding as a career destination of choice and to encourage more children to consider studying in STEM subjects, the SSDG has secured funding for a UK-wide programme as part of [Primary Engineer's Leader Award programme](#). This academic year, the SSDG will use this to bring shipbuilding into schools across the UK. Contact Primary Engineer to find out how you can connect with local schools and quote 'Shipbuilding' (01282 502 700; info@primaryengineer.com)



SSDG members meet Managing Director, James Donald, while visiting Mainstay Marine

SSDG chair, Paul Sheerin, also recently wrote to shipbuilders to provide an update on the skills group's communications campaign, highlighting how it will seek to align with the 'Destination Defence' campaign that was announced in the Defence Industrial Strategy – which will seek to attract talent to the sector. The SSDG will provide further updates in the new year on how its campaign will develop accordingly, and how you can support it.

Investment and Innovation

Major boost for Inchgreen Dry Dock



Chancellor Rachel Reeves visits Inchgreen Dry Dock following the budget announcement

The Chancellor's announcement of an additional £20 million to support work to enhance the dry dock and facilities at Inchgreen Marine Park on the Clyde is a welcome commitment to preserving a major national asset which we believe will play an important role for both commercial and defence applications

As one of the largest operational docks of its kind in the country, the NSO views it as crucial that irreplaceable sites like Inchgreen remain available to the UK's maritime industry, with the site already seeing £10m of investment between Inverclyde Council and Peel Ports Group.

A successful tender for the NOC

The NSO welcomes the news that the National Oceanography Office (NOC) has secured a contract with A&P Falmouth for the refit and maintenance of RRS James Cook and RRS Discovery for 2026.

Team Plymouth: Backing maritime autonomy

Gathering in Westminster in November, leaders from key organisations met to launch Team Plymouth – a collaborative group that will work together to maximise the benefit of the city's status as the UK's National Centre for Marine Autonomy.

Members of the NSO attended the launch event in support of this new initiative, which is well-placed to act as a conduit between industry, SMEs, residents, local authorities, and wider government.

Marine autonomy will be a major focus of the NSO's new Action Plan, which will set out specific actions to remove the barriers faced by this rapidly growing sector, which will transform the way the defence and commercial maritime sectors operate.



Representatives from Plymouth local authorities, Babcock, and HMNB Devonport gathered for the launch of Team Plymouth

The NSO frequently provides support to public sector procurement teams to maximise compliant accessibility of contract opportunities for British businesses. Working closely with the NOC to help its team launch a tender against extremely tight timelines, we ensured the best interests of British shipyards were represented.

Get in touch with the NSO

- **Contact us directly via [email](#)** to raise any issues you may be having
- **Exhibiting at an event?** Let us know – we would love to come and visit your stand.
- Join our [email distribution](#) list
- Keep an eye on our [website](#) for Shipbuilding Enterprise for Growth Group (SEG) updates and more
- Follow our [social media](#) channel for all updates