

Navy Command Development

Strategic Sea Lift – Future

Request For Information (RFI 051) -

713788451

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in supporting preliminary market engagement of Strategic Sea Lift – Future (SSL-F). This Request For Information (RFI) is in support of a potential Category A procurement programme to replace the current Strategic Sealift - Interim (SSL-I) capability with a modern and versatile solution that is adaptable to meeting the demands of the future operating environment.

Your responses to this RFI are highly valuable to the SSL-F team and will assist us in understanding the current market as well as the views, appetites, capabilities, and capacity of industry to deliver any potential requirement solution. Furthermore, your RFI response is invaluable in defining and refining our delivery options, assisting us to shape the procurement approach, estimating programme costs and timeframes to ensure that the programme delivers the required capability that represents value for money for the UK taxpayer.

This RFI seeks to elicit detailed information which may not be widely available in the open-source domain to gain a better understanding of what is available, or what could be available. The requirements have not yet been finalised and this information will help shape and inform those requirements and any subsequent procurement strategy.

The benefit from early visibility of this information has been balanced with an acceptance that these requirements are developing and subject to change. They should therefore be considered only as indicative at this stage and may not form part of any resultant procurement process.

The objectives of this RFI are:

- To determine the extent to which our high-level requirements are feasible and to identify potential technical or commercial challenges.
- To further understand innovative and novel solutions which may inform the solution space.
- To determine the appetite and capacity of the market to inform any procurement strategy and delivery approach.
- To determine the potential benefits and drawbacks of different solutions in meeting the project requirements.

Background

The UK's current strategic sealift capability is sponsored by Navy Command, who currently have primary responsibility for delivering a future capability.

The Strategic Sealift Future - Programme Team (hereinafter referred to as "The Authority") requires an assured and dedicated SSL service to deploy / redeploy UK Defence materiel overseas to deliver contingent operations, support UK Defence's global operating programme and to sustain Permanent Joint Operating Bases and Overseas Bases. The capability includes the movement of heavy armour and their transports, major equipment, ammunition and complex weapons and sensitive freight, supporting the UK global presence and is critical to the UK's contribution to NATO operations, including Article 5 commitments. The Authority intends to expand its current capability's capacity in order to provide support to contingent operations and ensure a resilience is built into the capability.

The current service is provided by Foreland Shipping Limited which owns and operates 4 x 'Roll On Roll Off' (Ro-Ro) Point class vessels. The Point Class vessels were purpose built to meet Ministry of Defence (MOD) requirements in 2002 and are exclusively chartered by the MOD to support Defence tasking.

The current Strategic SeaLift capability will endure into the early 2030s, thus providing an opportunity to establish a long-term future sealift capability thereafter.

How to complete this RFI

Completion of this RFI is voluntary and does not form part of any competitive procedure or formal launch of a requirement. Participation and completion of this RFI cannot and does not guarantee any inclusion in subsequent procurement processes. It should be noted that all information released by the Authority as part of this market engagement is subject to change and may not form part of any future procurement process.

To complete this RFI please provide your written responses in the form of a completed Annex B – Questionnaire.

The Authority would welcome you to complete this RFI for any / all the Options identified in Annex A - Key Considerations for Market Engagement & Draft Key User Requirements. You are invited to submit as many responses as you want to represent your complete portfolio with regards to the requirements described. Please make sure you identify your company at the top of each response submitted so we can correctly collate the responses to the authoring company.

The Authority may wish to follow up on the RFI with one-to-one meetings (arrangements including dates are still TBC), to run through any clarification points, gain a better understanding of your questions and responses as well as understanding any potential barriers to entry. Please note that the Authority will ensure fairness and transparency throughout this process with the key aim of listening to responder's views.

Your responses to this RFI are requested no later than 12:00hrs on Friday 28th February 2025. If you believe that you will not be able to complete this questionnaire by the deadline, please notify the Authority as soon as possible. Please provide your responses by completing the Annex B document and providing responses to NavyDev-SSL-F@mod.gov.uk.

This Questionnaire at Annex B is presented in the following sections:

Section 1 – About You

Section 2 – Vessel Design

- Part A – Vessel Design
- Part B – Vessel Particulars
- Part C – Key Features
- Part D – Innovation, Adaptability and Futureproofing
- Part E – Rough Order of Magnitude Costing (Excluding VAT)

Section 3 – Shipbuilding

- Part A – Shipbuilding Location & Capacity
- Part B – Future Technology Considerations
- Part C – Future Environmental Considerations

Section 4 – Existing Vessels for Sale

- Part A – Existing Vessels for Sale
- Part B – Existing Vessels for Sale Key Features
- Part C – Existing Vessels for Sale Innovation, Adaptability and Futureproofing
- Part D – Existing Vessels for Sale Suitability

Section 5 – Existing Vessels for Charter

- Part A – Existing Vessels for Charter
- Part B – Existing Vessels for Charter Suitability
- Part C – Existing Vessels for Charter Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Section 6 – Upgrade & Conversion

Part A – Examples of Previous Upgrades / Conversion

Part B – Challenges of Upgrades & Conversion

Section 7 – Fleet Management & Operation

Part A – Examples of Fleet Management & Operation

Part B – Challenges of Fleet Management & Operation

Section 8 – Crewing

Part A – Examples of Crewing Commercial & Government Vessels

Part B – Challenges of Crewing Commercial & Government Vessels

Section 9 – Additional Questions

Part A – Additional Questions

Some sections may require additional information, particularly technical information. Where this is the case, please provide these as separate attachments, clearly titling them, and making reference to the specific question. There is no specific format requested for these, however, preference is for documents in *.pdf, *.docx, *.png, *.jpeg.

Please feel free to provide any other additional technical information in addition to that requested. Outputs of sea trials, certification, photographs are all useful and could help the concept development.

Completion of each Section is voluntary and incomplete responses are acceptable, for example where a responder does not have any responses to give in Section 2 but is able to provide responses to Section 3 this is acceptable.

When completing each Section please consider the questions within the context of the attached Annex A - Key Considerations for Market Engagement & Draft Key User Requirements. The information within Annex A is provided to support responders in contextualising their responses aligned to the Authority's developing requirement and should be viewed as draft indicative information only.

For completion of the Sections below please note the following:

Section 1 – About You – Please provide your response using the template contained within Annex B.

Section 2 – Vessel Design – The Authority is primarily looking for input from responders with an understanding of vessels or vessel designs available on the existing market which they may own or be aware of.

Section 3 – Shipbuilding – The Authority is primarily looking for input from responders with experience in Shipbuilding design and manufacture.

Section 4 – Existing Vessels for Sale – The Authority is primarily looking for input from responders who have existing vessels available for sale.

Section 5 – Existing Vessels for Charter – The Authority is primarily looking for input from responders who have existing vessels available for charter.

Section 6 – Upgrade & Conversion – The Authority is primarily looking for input from responders with experience in upgrade or conversion of existing vessels.

Section 7 – Fleet Management & Operation – The Authority is primarily looking for input from responders with experience in Fleet Management & Operation.

Section 8 – Crewing – The Authority is primarily looking for input from responders who have served on Point Class Vessels or those with experience in crewing commercial vessels.

Section 9 – Additional Questions – These questions will aim to seek additional supplementary information in support of the wider RFI response. Within this Section is an opportunity to ask questions of the Authority. It is not the Authority's intention to provide responses to these questions at this time however this is an opportunity for responders to pose questions which the Authority will consider in the drafting of any requirement and procurement strategy.

Though the Authority is primarily looking for responses from those with the experience listed above, it is not restricted to only those and responses from all who feel they can add value are encouraged.

Indicative timeline of upcoming events

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| RFI Response Deadline | 12:00hrs on Friday 28 th February 2025 |
| Commence one-to-ones | March 2025 |
| Conclude Initial Market Engagement | April 2025 |
| Strategic Outline Case | November 2025 |

This timeline is provided on a without commitment basis for indicative purposes only. The Authority will not be held to these dates and reserves the right to adapt them as is required or it deems fit.

Disclaimer

Participants should note that all the documents provided with this paper are drafts and the positions expressed in this paper are indicative of the Authority's current intent. The information provided in the documents and in this paper are provided for information only and for the purposes of this preliminary market engagement exercise, they are not to be relied upon by recipients. The information provided may be subject to change and is not binding in any way on the Authority.

Suppliers participating in this market engagement exercise are encouraged to provide written feedback to the Authority covering the subject matter set out in the relevant sections.

The Authority intends to use the feedback from these market engagements to inform the further shaping of its requirements and commercial construct. However, it is at the Authority's sole discretion as to how to construct the requirement, procurement documents and the structure of the process for any subsequent competitive phases. The Authority shall not be bound to incorporate any feedback received as part of the preliminary market engagement or otherwise into the documentation set out in any future procurement.

Neither the Authority nor its respective advisers will be liable for any costs or expenses incurred by industry participants in connection with this market engagement.

Annex A – SSL-F – Key Considerations for Market Engagement and Draft Key User Requirements.

Navy Command Development

Strategic Sea Lift – Future

Request For Information (RFI)

Annex A

Key considerations for market engagement & Draft Key User Requirements

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Key considerations for market engagement

The information contained within this Annex should be used to inform your responses to the questionnaire.

Options Mix - In considering the optimal solution the Authority has already generated potential Options to satisfy the requirement although the below options are not considered exhaustive.

| Options | Additional Information |
|--|---|
| Vessel Build / Conversion / Charter Options | |
| 1 – New Build | Design and build of new vessels to meet the Authority's Key User Requirements |
| 2 – Existing Vessel Conversion | Purchase and conversion of existing vessels / designs to meet the Authority's Key User Requirements |
| 3 – Existing Vessel Charter | Vessels owned and operated by a private entity on charter to the Authority. |
| Vessel Ownership & Support Options | |
| 4 – Defence Owned & Supported | Vessels owned and operated by the Authority. |
| 5 – Defence Owned & Commercially Supported | Vessels owned by the Authority and operated by a private entity. |
| 6 – Commercially Owned & Defence Supported | Vessels owned by a private entity and operated by the Authority. |
| 7 – Commercially Owned & Supported | Vessels owned and operated by a private entity, Contracted to the Authority. |

Following the completion of this RFI process, the Authority intends to proceed to Strategic Outline Case where a decision panel will further explore the Options, and, following recommendations based partially on the outcome of this RFI, will shortlist Options to be scrutinised further before final agreement on the procurement strategy.

Indicative Key Characteristics – Aspects that the Authority are particularly interested in:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Vessel Lifespan | Circa 30 years for a new build, at least 10 years remaining for an existing vessel. |
| Flagged & Operated | Each Vessel shall; a) Be registered in the UK, b) Be British Owned, c) Classed by a full IACS member which is headquartered in the UK. |
| Vessel Size | Vessels should be less than 200m in length and 8m in draught. |
| Cargo Scope | Vessels should be capable of carrying International Maritime Dangerous Goods Class 1-9 cargo as well as provide cold chain storage. |
| Capacity | Providing a minimum of 15600 Lanes in Meters (LiMs) at a minimum of 2.8 metres wide across a minimum of 4 vessels. |
| Operating Environment | Vessels should be capable of functioning under the full range of environmental conditions (such as hot, cold, humid & wet) in all seasons, and in the littoral, from arctic to tropical as well as the open sea. |
| Power & Propulsion | Vessels should be able to run on globally available fuel sources as well as be adaptable to future fuel solutions. |
| Range / Speed | Built and operated to commercial standards for fast and economical RoRo Vessels to provide Strategic Sealift Capability in support of UK Operations, deployments and exercises, also configured for extended range at economical speed. |
| Structure | Vessels should have strengthened hulls and decks to enable transportation of military equipment, minimum 5T/m2. |
| Ice Class | Ice Class 1A this is the criteria for determining a ships ability to navigate through sea ice. |
| Survivability | Enhanced survivability is required to mitigate against physical loss of a Vessel. |
| Protection | Vessels should be able to be equipped to accept weapons and protection systems. |
| Ramps | Vessels should have a self-supporting main ramp for offloading to Mexeflote, including both Stern (supported SWL 150mT / self-supported 75mT), and Side Ramps (supported SWL of 75mT) for efficiency and resilience. |
| Mexeflote Operations | Vessels should be equipped with an internal ballast system capable of altering the trim outside normal parameters to permit roll-on roll-off transfers direct to Mexeflote. |
| Crane | Vessels should have at least 1 crane able to move 20 & 40 ft ISO containers and cargo, to enable rapid deployment and operational flexibility. |
| Cargo Access | Vessels should allow access to all containers at sea while they are fully secured to the ship. |
| Deployability | Able to deliver cargo, to the right place, for the right time, without damage or degradation and exploit the most expedient transit routes, including Panama and Suez canals. |
| Living Space | Vessels should be equipped with living spaces, gym, toilets, showers, rest, laundry, food preparation, welfare facilities, recreational & exercise areas, for its crew and up to 12 additional personnel, suitable and sufficient for continued operation whilst in transit, at sea. |

Areas for Innovation – The Authority is keen to explore innovative ideas in key areas, in particular the ability to improve the environmental impact of vessels through the reduction of Greenhouse Gas emissions, ensuring an adaptability to meet future fuel scenarios, reducing the cost of ownership and operation of vessels through automation and innovative approaches to Shipbuilding and maintenance in order to maximise vessel lifespans.

Designs – As part of this engagement, the Authority are seeking examples of designs that have either been proven in service for Ro-Ro activity or are at (or close to) a “build level” state of maturity with design lineage to confidently prove its capabilities or a modified design (perhaps described as “state of the market”). If the market believes a new design would better meet the needs of the programme, the Authority will welcome thoughts on how and why as well as any modification of existing designs that may be required to better meet SSL-F additional requirements.

All vessels are expected to perform to design characteristics, offering low maintenance to minimise through life costs, minimal adverse environmental impact and allow advanced and emerging technologies to be fully exploited as and when the opportunities arise, supporting where possible an environmentally sound philosophy.

Draft Key User Requirements (KUR) & Mandatory User Requirements (MUR)

The indicative key characteristics and areas for innovation for the vessel requirements should be used as a guide to prompt and tailor your responses. Please also refer to the draft Key User Requirements and supporting Justification:

| | Requirement | Justification | Amplifying remarks |
|-------|---|--|--|
| KUR 1 | The SSL-F capability shall have capacity to deliver the required number of routine and contingent tasks to support future UK Defence standing commitments and Contingent Operations. | <p>This equates to 4 vessels of 2600 LiMs to meet routine commitments and a minimum total of 15600 LiMs across 6 vessels required for contingency operations.</p> <p>The vessels shall have UK ownership and flag.</p> | - |
| KUR 2 | The SSL-F capability shall embark, lift and disembark heavy defence inventory within a mixed cargo comprising all IMDG codes. | <p>There may be a role in supporting main force (Army) operations. Army heavy vehicle inventory in the 2030s is assumed to include Challenger tanks, as well as Ajax and Boxer armoured fighting vehicles. Additionally, there may be artillery and other assets.</p> <p>Ramps are the safest and most expedient means to load/offload armoured vehicles and heavy equipment. A self-supporting ramp is essential for offloading military vehicles in ports with limited or damaged infrastructure and for offloading to Mexeflote.</p> <p>Cranes provide flexibility of military logistic delivery and enable disaster relief and sustainment operations. Cranes are a critical element of the capability in moving ISO containers and cargo as well as deploying the boats Mexeflote and associated small boats.</p> <p>Additionally, the capability must enable the safe stowage and transportation of cargo, including heavy armoured vehicles, military systems, ISO containers, cold chain storage/Reefers and</p> | <p>At least one organic crane with minimum SWL of 40T with ability to lift a fully loaded 40' ISO container.</p> <p>The capability must have effective manoeuvrability at low speed and in confined spaces and an ability to berth without tugs.</p> <p>Must have a stern and side ramp to discharge</p> |

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| | | Dangerous Goods (DG). The capability shall have the capacity to secure vulnerable assets below decks where they are protected from the harsh maritime environment. | vehicles to a Mexefloat / jetty. |
| KUR 3 | The capability must be able to operate globally and utilise the most expedient transit routes. | To achieve this, it shall be able to safely navigate a diverse range of waterways from the open seas to the littoral, and from arctic to tropical. This includes restricted and man-made waterways and be able to operate without reliance on Host Nation Support (HNS). | <p>Safely navigate a diverse range of waterways from the open seas to the littoral, and from arctic to tropical.</p> <p>This includes restricted and man-made waterways. Must be able to operate without reliance on Host Nation Support (HNS).</p> |
| KUR 4 | The SSL-F capability shall deploy, reposition and access global seaports in a RORO capacity. | Keeping the Ship Length Overall (LOA) < 200m and draught <8m allows access to 70% of ports within the regions of interest to Defence. Access to Sea Mounting Centre (SMC) is key and other APB ports is key. | <p>Vessels Length Overall (LOA) must be < 200m.</p> <p>Vessels must be safe to operate in all load conditions, with ship draught no greater than 8m.</p> <p>The vessels must be compatible with SMC Marchwood and other main UK commercial ports. (Primary Sea Ports Of Embarkation).</p> |
| KUR 5 | The SSL-F Capability shall be reliable and be available | <p>Each Vessel shall be reliable with the objective of reducing or mitigating:</p> <p>Operational Defects & Maintenance tasks.</p> | Each vessel shall be available 355 days / year with a mission readiness availability period |

| | | | |
|-------|---|--|---|
| | within strict lead times. | | <p>not exceeding 72 hours.</p> <p>The capability as a whole shall deliver no less than 4 concurrent global tasks throughout the year.</p> <p>The Vessels should be able to undertake as much maintenance as practicable whilst on operational deployment.</p> |
| KUR 6 | The SSL-F capability shall be resilient to attack. | <p>It is possible that the SSL-F vessels will experience piracy attacks as well as attacks by slow, low-flying aircraft and autonomous surface and air vehicles in permissive and low threat environments. Force Protection is intended to be provided by Royal Marines.</p> | <p>Full NATG safety certification required.</p> |
| MUR 1 | The SSL-F capability shall manage its impact on the environment. | <p>The Secretary of State's Policy Statement for Health, Safety and Environmental Protection (HS&EP) for Defence, which requires compliance with statutory requirements.</p> <p>The First Sea Lord's Environmental Protection Statement , November 2017, states that the Royal Navy will "comply with all applicable environmental legislation and, remaining cognisant of emerging legislative changes, develop environmental requirements which aim to ensure that we can continue to operate globally into the future."</p> | <p>Statutory compliance includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental Protection Act 1990; - International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 as modified by the Protocol of 1978. - The Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment |

| | | | |
|-------|---|---|--|
| | | | <p>Directive (WEEE).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Hazardous Waste Regulations 2005 - Hong Kong Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009 - UK REACH |
| MUR 2 | <p>The SSL-F capability shall manage risk towards maritime energy transition and resilience, while managing its carbon contribution to climate change, balanced against availability and operational objectives.</p> | <p>The Defence Operational Energy Strategy</p> <p>It is RN policy to reduce carbon Intensity as part of the UK's treaty commitments to Carbon Reduction. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to update/upgrade the energy/power architecture to reduce the carbon footprint and ensure access to global fuel supply through life; - Enhanced monitoring of emissions and particulates. | <p>All certification standards to be met uniformly across all ships.</p> <p>Any future fuel solution must be available globally.</p> <p>Opportunity to increase efficiency with hull coatings etc.</p> |
| MUR 3 | <p>The SSL-F capability shall be safe to own and operate.</p> | <p>The Secretary of State's Policy Statement for Health, Safety and Environmental Protection (HS&EP) for Defence, which requires compliance with statutory requirements.</p> <p>Classification society rules and regulations ensure that appropriate standards (including safety) are set for the design, construction and lifetime maintenance of the ship and, where necessary, to demonstrate delivery of capability (including safety).</p> | <p>Statutory compliance includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. - Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. - Management of Health and Safety |

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| | | | at Work Regulations 1999. |
| MUR 4 | The SSL-F capability shall provide physical security. | Physical security and Protective security is a mandatory policy as per BRd 8988 & JSP440 Leaflet 4. | The applicable flow-down to ships will include DEF STAN 08-216 and DEF STAN 02-141. |
| MUR 5 | The SSL-F capability shall provide information security. | <p>HMG policy defines mandated information assurance standards.</p> <p>Secure-by-design is the new policy that defines the MOD approach to managing and how these will be signed off and is derived from the parent National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) Secure-by-design policy. JSP440 leaflet 5C describes the process.</p> | <p>Relevant HMG standards include HMG IAS1&2, HMG IAS4 & HMG IAS5.</p> <p>Relevant JSP440 leaflets include 8 (information security), 10 (CIS asset management) and 12 (Communications Security).</p> <p>Suppliers are mandated to comply with DEF STAN 05-138 Issue 3 (Cyber Security for Defence Suppliers)</p> |

Annex B – SSL-F – Questionnaire is attached as an Excel spreadsheet.