

**RFI0037**

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

**PROVISION OF STATIC TRAINING VESSELS /HARBOUR TRAINING SHIPS (HTSs) IN SUPPORT OF PROJECT POWERFUL**

**RFI Title:**  **RFI0037**

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Contents

[1. Introduction 3](#_Toc72400948)

[2. Background 3](#_Toc72400949)

[3. RFI intended outcomes 3](#_Toc72400950)

[4. RFI Procedure 3](#_Toc72400952)

[5. How to submit responses to this RFI 4](#_Toc72400953)

[6. Confidentiality & Proprietary Information 4](#_Toc72400954)

[7. Costs of preparing your RFI response 4](#_Toc72400955)

[8](#_Toc72400957). Contact 5

[9.Annex A 6](#_Toc72400958)

# Introduction

This RFI is not a bidding opportunity but a means by which industry can provide information. Any resulting procurement activity will be conducted competitively.

The purpose of this RFI is to seek industry views on how the overarching requirement can be delivered in the most cost effective and expeditious way.

**Please note:**

**This RFI is an information gathering exercise, no further discussions with industry are planned at this stage however any future procurement activity will be advertised in line with public procurement regulations on the Defence Sourcing Portal and Contracts Finder.**

# Background

The Royal Navy (RN) has supported its Cadets and Youth (C&Y) groups through funding streams, infrastructure support and support in kind. Most visibly, the RN has provided a Harbour Training Ship (HTS) and some associated infrastructure at Whale Island, Portsmouth since 1963, firstly with HMS RAME HEAD, thence HMS KENT from 1980 and, latterly, the Type 82 destroyer HMS BRISTOL (BRSL) since 1991[[1]](#footnote-2). Predominantly established in place to support C&Y General Naval Acquaint Training[[2]](#footnote-3) and water-borne training in Portsmouth harbour, the HTS also provided substantial C&Y accommodation, including inherent staff support, and a ‘Warship Experience’ for C&Y groups[[3]](#footnote-4). Additionally, the HTS provided a training facility for a range of other RN/MOD users which has now fallen by the wayside.

Due to increasing maintenance costs and the need for significant further works to be undertaken in order to maintain her as a safe and viable HTS the decision was taken to close BRSL for future use in December 2020"Historically HTS could provide circa 30,000 bed nights and circa 500 C&Y People courses per annum. While steps have been taken to ensure C&Y continue to receive a range of opportunities to understand life in the RN the loss of its residential accommodation and ability to deliver the ‘Warship Experience’ is significant in. reducing the quality and realism of the C&Y experience which the RN is expected to[[4]](#footnote-5) deliver. Delivery of replacement HTSs via Project POWERFUL will return the RN to a compliant policy position with regard to DEO 11.11 and JSP814 Policy and Regulations for MOD Sponsored Cadet Forces.

Navy Command requires a UK based ‘warship experience’ and residential capability in close proximity to water-borne activity facilities, to provide RN Cadet Forces and members of other Youth organisations with access to a realistic, challenging and contemporary warship experience. This should be readily accessible from their home training locations, or during residential ‘camps’, in order to develop and inspire young people within a safe maritime environment, as part of the RN’s commitment to Defence Enabling Objective 11.11.

# Additional Context

**Cadet Forces Mission**. The Cadet Forces (CF) Mission is to prepare Cadets for success in their chosen way of life, increasing their awareness and understanding of the Armed Forces and their role in society by delivering enjoyable, well-organised, military-themed activities in a challenging, stimulating, contemporary experience that develops and inspires young people within a safe environment.

**Cadet Forces Intent**. ‘The benefits of the cadet experience – personal and social development as well as an increased awareness both of the Armed Forces (AF) and of possible military careers – should be within reach of most young people across the United Kingdom. Training will be safe, fun, efficient and effective, and delivered by motivated and competent adult volunteers who are valued by Defence and Society. Cadets will be understood, recognised and supported by their local communities and sponsoring Service, whose values, standards and ethos they will reflect. All those within the cadet movement will be allowed to challenge themselves, and in the process of so doing, will widen their horizons and their awareness of their own potential. The critical success factor is the continuing commitment of sufficient, high quality adult volunteers to deliver the cadet experience’.

**The Cadet Experience**. The Cadet experience is defined as: In volunteering to join a uniformed and disciplined military-themed youth organisation, cadets follow a military-themed ethos and experience a wide variety of well- organised, enjoyable and challenging activities in a safely managed environment. These activities allow the cadet to develop a sense of responsibility and service to the community, self-reliance, resourcefulness, endurance, perseverance, leadership, teamwork, communication skills and resilience. In undertaking these activities, cadets can also gain additional nationally recognised educational and vocational qualifications. *It is the military-themed elements that set the cadets apart from other youth organisations*[[5]](#footnote-6).

Delivery of the Cadet Experience in the main is achieved through a blend of activities delivered at the unit by staff and adult volunteers. Irrespective of the quality of the instruction and the diversity of the activities undertaken within the unit, these must be augmented by activity-based experiences obtained within the environs of the RN Training Estate, on platforms and in establishments. Exposure to the military training environment, front-line units and service men and women provides invaluable real-life experience which undoubtedly contributes to an individual’s development, influences social mobility and supports the RN’s contribution to Defence Enabling Objective 11.11 - Deliver the MoD sponsored CF.

### Warship Experience and Residential Capability

The Warship Experience and Residential Capability for RNCF Training is likely to consist of mainly afloat facilities, in the form of a replacement HTS (or ships). A HTS can provide the cadets with an excellent Warship Experience by focusing on shipboard life and delivering a realistic working and living environment. The proposed afloat activities that the HTS is expected to provide include an interactive experience, incorporating a series of ‘onboard’ physical challenges[[6]](#footnote-7), scenario simulators, virtual reality activities and traditional instructional activities, as well as accommodation for both cadets and CFAVs.

There are Opportunities to enhance the delivered cadet experience through the use of technology such as Virtual and Augmented Reality, the simulation of activities on current and future warships of the RN. Whilst it is acknowledged that this could be conducted remotely or at the cadet’s parent unit this is a less effective method in comparison to the high-quality activities previously delivered through residential courses in a Naval Base area.

### Anticipated Operating Environment

The components of POWERFUL are expected to operate year-round from fixed coastal locations in the UK and, therefore, should be capable of withstanding all climatic and environmental conditions that could be expected in the maritime locations. The facilities should ideally be sited close to existing RN establishments which can support many of the activities required; however, there may be an opportunity to provide some of the capability at other locations in order to reduce travel times and make the use of the facilities more attractive for short-term courses.

POWERFUL is not constrained by having to operate solely, or in part, on the Defence Estate. Operating locations will be determined by objective analysis; due consideration will be given to security, safety and safeguarding in order to protect the Cadets using the POWERFUL facilities. It is anticipated that the Authority will specify the POWERFUL operating locations post option assessment.

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### Anticipated Operating Process

Courses are allocated and co-ordinated by RNCF HQ to maximise utilisation of the training assets. Courses may be conducted in parallel with different start and finish dates so there is a need to provide hotel services to prepare accommodation between courses.

It will be necessary to provide a full time (24/7) management team to operate and maintain the HTS and shore facilities. An appropriate support solution for the HTS(s) needs to be part of the proposed solution.

RNCF personnel will normally arrive at the POWERFUL facility for courses by coach or mini-buses from their home base, transfer on foot to the accommodation and be given safety and other briefings soon after arrival. Food and drinks are anticipated to be provided in an existing shoreside military messing facility which will be factored in when choosing operating locations.

Training courses will be organised so as to make best use of the time available to meet the requirements of the unit concerned and will comprise both weekends and weekday courses with travel being predominantly on the Sunday and Friday afternoons. Courses will likely consist of a combination of making use of the water-borne activities on offer, gaining an understanding and experience of RN operations both onboard the HTS and through ship visits (where available), participating in sport activities, undergoing Naval Drill and traditional skills training, receiving and delivering presentations, and a range of social activities.

### Anticipated Acquisition Strategy

The default commercial strategy for POWERFUL will be competitive. Consideration may be given to other strategies, such as single source or utilisation of existing contractual arrangements, if a case can be made that, by doing so, it offers the Department better value for money and/or reduces delivery risk but any alternatives to an open competitive route must be in accordance with all relevant legislation.

Due to the positive impact that it can have the Authority would be interested in POWERFUL could be delivered at pace; with a preference for availability by Apr ’27 – but recognising this may be ambitious.

### Anticipated Interoperability

The HTS capability will need to interoperate with a number of existing facilities and services in order to deliver the full functionality required, depending on the chosen site. Examples include:

* Shoreside utilities and support services such as the provision of electrical power, fresh and sea water, waste removal, and communications connectivity for HTS(s).
* Berthing infrastructure at the chosen berth including jetty bollards or mooring posts.
* Shore-based catering and hotel services that ensure the Cadets are provided with adequate food and drink and with clean bedding on arrival.
* Existing Naval sporting, recreational, boat and training facilities if available in the chosen location.

### Constraints

The design of the POWERFUL solution is constrained by the following:

* The availability of sufficient depth of water and space in the potential locations at which to moor a former warship.
* The need to offer a flexible mix of gender-neutral accommodation for cadets and adult volunteer staff; aspiration for a provision of 200-300 beds per night, utilising one or more HTS(s).
* MOD policy regarding the running of RNCF groups including policies relating to their safety, security and the safeguarding of young people.
* Government policy with respect to environment sustainability and NetZero.

### Platforms

The RN have two former warships currently set aside for potential conversion into HTS:

* HMS ECHO is a Survey Vessel Hydrographic Oceanic (SVHO) that was de-commissioned in 2022. She is currently berthed in a non-tidal berth awaiting disposal, subject to being utilised for POWERFUL.
* HMS RAMSAY is a Sandown class Single Role Mine Hunter, made of GRP. She is currently being used as a STOROB donor for the MCMV fleet but is not expected to be suitable for regeneration.

Respondents are not constrained by this and may offer alternative solutions, should they be in a position to do so.

1. RFI intended outcomes

This RFI aims to achieve the following three (3) outcomes:

1.    Develop further the Authority’s understanding of the different options and capabilities available in the market, both current and emerging.

2.    Align Authority requirements with industry standards and processes.

3. Enable the Authority to develop a procurement strategy that will deliver best value for money for Defence and which supports an equitable and transparent approach to working with industry.

1. RFI Procedure

Responses to this RFI will be reviewed by subject matter experts from different functional areas within Navy Command Headquarters.

If upon review of your submission any clarifications or additional information is required, you will be contacted using the details provided in your RFI response.

Any details provided in response to this RFI will be used for information purposes only and will not be used to determine the potential Suppliers who will be invited to bid, should the Authority proceed to tender.

The results and analysis of this RFI shall not constitute any form of pre-qualification exercise.

Any formal procurement process will be undertaken in accordance with the relevant Procurement Law.

Nothing in this RFI, or any other engagements with Industry prior to a formal procurement process, shall be construed as a representation as to the Authority’s ultimate decision in relation to the future requirement.

The decision by any organisation to respond or not to this RFI in no way impacts the evaluation process which would be followed in the event of a formal procurement.

1. How to submit responses to this RFI

Respondents should provide responses in accordance with the format provided in **Annex A** quoting the RFI reference on all documentation and emails**.**

Please do not submit additional documents such as company overviews, the purpose of the RFI is to collect information related to the technical solution, any additional documents will not be included in the review process.

Any responses received after the deadline will be passed to the subject matter experts for information, however they may not be included in the RFI review meetings which are to be held immediately following the deadline.

Once completed, please return electronically to the e-mail address(es) shown below in **section 9,** no later than **12:00, 11th September 2024**

Responses will be acknowledged electronically by return e-mail.

1. Confidentiality & Proprietary Information

No information included in your response, or in discussions connected to it, will be disclosed to any other third party.

Proprietary information, where included, should be kept to minimum and must be clearly marked.

**For the purposes of this RFI, any documentation submitted should be classification OFFICIAL**.

1. Costs of preparing your RFI response

Any costs relating to the preparation and submission of a response to this RFI are the sole responsibility of the respondent.

1. Contact

Quoting the RFI reference, please submit

1. any requests for clarification
2. all responses to this RFI and
3. any questions regarding Classification of document(s) intended for submission, to:

[NAVYCOMRCL-RFI@mod.gov.uk](mailto:NAVYCOMRCL-RFI@mod.gov.uk)

1. Annex A

**RFI0037**

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| **Question** | **Answer** |
| Company Name |  |
| Company Address |  |
| Is the company a Small - Medium Enterprise satisfies two or more of the following requirements: not more than 250 employees, a turnover of less than £36 million or a balance sheet of less than £18 million)? |  |
|  | |
| Name of Company representative completing the RFI |  |
| Contact details (e-mail and telephone number) |  |
| Company web site address |  |
|  | |
| Main products/services/line of business |  |
| Main market sector |  |
| Number of years in this market sector |  |
| **QUESTIONS** | |
| 1. What is your vision for generating a Harbour Training Ship (HTS) (or Ships) to deliver the Cadet Warship Experience? | |
|  | |
| 1. Expanding your vision further, how would you ensure the cadet training experience remained contemporary and relevant to the navy of today and tomorrow? | |
|  | |
| 1. Based on your vision above, what is the estimated onboard bed capacity that can be achieved? | |
|  | |
| 1. Based on your vision above, how would you support your solution(s) to maintain the capability of the next 20-25 years? | |
|  | |
| 1. Based on your vision above, what is the likely timescale for delivery? What enablers would you consider necessary to enable POWERFUL to be delivered at pace? | |
|  | |
| 1. Based on your vision above, what are the indicative costs for your solution? (non-attributable and non-binding). Are there any limiting factors that you foresee? | |
|  | |
| 1. Based on your vision above, what are the risks you foresee in delivering your solution? (non-attributable and non-binding) How would you mitigate them? | |
|  | |
| 1. Is there anything else you would like to bring to our attention regarding the delivery of the POWERFUL Warship Experience and Residential Capability? | |
|  | |
| **Innovative solutions are most welcome, even if they do not meet all the requirements above, we would welcome the opportunity to consider the positives and negatives.** | |

1. The large size of the HTS also enabled the provision of a breakwater function for Whale Island. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Which in itself includes acquaint visits to RN ships, units and establishments [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Including further Youth Groups such as Army Cadets and RAF Cadets. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Defence Enabling Objective 11.11 - Deliver MOD Sponsored Cadet Forces [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. JSP 814 Policy C&Y and Regulations for MOD Sponsored Cadet Forces, Ch 1 – Status and Aims of Cadet Forces. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Colours & Sunset Ceremonies, Thimblehunt, Hands to Actions Stations, Navigation, and Seamanship tasks. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)