Dear Julian:

During Business of the House Questions on 19th January, you asked about the long term future of the Royal Navy Landing Platform Dock Class ships, HMS ALBION and HMS BULWARK. There are no current plans to decommission the ships early, and I can reassure you that their out of service dates are 2033 and 2034 respectively.

In the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) 2010, we announced that one of the two ships would be held at high readiness for operations while the other would be placed at lower readiness. This commitment remains extant. As the high readiness ship since 2011, HMS BULWARK continues to prove a vital asset to the Royal Navy. In 2015, the ship made a significant contribution to the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean and more recently, returned to the United Kingdom following a successful deployment as part of the Joint Expeditionary Force (Maritime) to the Middle East, working alongside our partner nations. HMS ALBION has reached a significant milestone in her major refit in dry dock and is programmed to replace HMS BULWARK as the designated high readiness ship this year.

In SDSR 2015, we pledged to enhance a Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) aircraft carrier to support our amphibious capability: The QEC aircraft carriers will offer a significant basing option for the projection of air and amphibious power. Together with the existing amphibious ships of the Royal Navy and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, these will provide the capability to deploy our amphibious forces when required.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

HARRIETT BALDWIN MP

Rt Hon Dr Julian Lewis MP
Chair
House of Commons Defence Committee
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