



The Rt Hon Grant Shapps  
Secretary of State for Defence  
Ministry of Defence  
Whitehall  
SW1A 2HB

## Charlie Murphy & Cllr Steve Pitt

Liberal Democrat Prospective Parliamentary  
Candidate for Portsmouth South &  
Leader of Portsmouth City Council

Dear Secretary of State,

Representing Portsmouth, we have been concerned by reports in the Portsmouth News and MailOnline that the Ministry of Defence is considering selling or mothballing HMS Prince of Wales.

**The Royal Navy and the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers are of essential importance not just to Portsmouth, but to British, European and NATO security.**

The Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers are a vital component of the UK's capabilities, having replaced the Invincible Class. As of last month, the UK has operated purpose-built aircraft carriers for over a century. The UK is part of a very small group of countries which operate aircraft carriers as part of their standing surface fleet, they are a hallmark of an advanced blue water navy. These highly specialised ships allow the UK to conduct humanitarian and security operations wherever needed.

**Portsmouth Liberal Democrats have been consistent in calling for two aircraft carriers, and recently we have seen the need for a second operational ship laid bare.**

As you will be aware, HMS Prince of Wales is on exercise currently having had to stand in for HMS Queen Elizabeth in February due to a breakdown. With the failure of HMS Queen Elizabeth in February, HMS Prince of Wales stepped in and demonstrated the need for a second operational aircraft carrier.

**These ships are a key part of our defence infrastructure, there is a very clear need to maintain two operational aircraft carriers in case of technical difficulty.**

HMS Prince of Wales only arrived home to Portsmouth in November 2019, less than 5 years ago. She is very early in her active service life and still has a huge amount to offer the Royal Navy and British security.

**It would be complete madness to sell HMS Prince of Wales less than 5 years since she was commissioned.**

HMS Prince of Wales came with a large but justifiable price tag, costing the British taxpayer £3.5 billion. A large part of this cost would not be recoverable by sale, and the cost to our security would be disastrous.

**Tens of thousands of hard-working people are employed by the Royal Navy in Portsmouth. Selling or mothballing HMS Prince of Wales would significantly weaken the surface fleet, and be a disappointment for those who serve.**

Throughout the week, unnamed sources have given contradictory briefs to the MailOnline and the Telegraph leaving the situation uncertain.

Will you assure those working in the Royal Navy, those in Portsmouth and people across the country that you will not compromise British security by short-sightedly selling or mothballing HMS Prince of Wales when she is not even 5 years into her service?

Yours Sincerely,

*Charlie Murphy*

Charlie Murphy  
Liberal Democrat Prospective Parliamentary  
Candidate for Portsmouth South

*Steve Pitt*

Councillor Steve Pitt  
Leader of Portsmouth City Council