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AUKUS Submarine Project

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Henry Smith >

(Crawley) (Con)

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9. What recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of progress on the AUKUS submarine project. (Unique identification number 904893 (Unique identification number))

The Secretary of State for Defence >

(Mr Ben Wallace)

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I recently accompanied Prime Minister Albanese to Barrow-in-Furness, where the next generation of AUKUS nuclear submarines will be built for the Royal Navy—a testament to our joint commitment. This multi-decade undertaking will create thousands of jobs in the UK, delivering on the Prime Minister’s priority to grow the economy, and demonstrating the experience and skill that is embodied in British industry.

Henry Smith >

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I welcome the Australian Government’s decision to design their submarines on the SSN-AUKUS model, and I understand that Australian Prime Minister Albanese was in Barrow recently to see that work. What assessment has my right hon. Friend made of the benefits of AUKUS and the design being made in this country to the supply chain across the United Kingdom?

Mr Wallace >

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Building complicated machines such as submarines has the benefit of a long and broad supply chain. The AUKUS model will be truly collaborative: while based on a UK submersible ship nuclear replacement, I expect it over time to be built by Australian hands and with United States skills and supply chains, which will provide opportunities to both countries, alongside ourselves. That is good news for British industry, for skills in places such as Barrow-in-Furness, and for our alliances with Australia and the United States.

Mr Kevan Jones >

(North Durham) (Lab)

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I thank the Secretary of State for his response to that question. I visited Australia last year and saw the great work that the Australians are undertaking on AUKUS; it is a great national endeavour. Is he confident that in the UK the Department for Business and Trade and others realise that if we are to get the benefit of this exciting project, we need that national endeavour here, especially on skills and technology across Government?

Mr Wallace >[Share](#)

The right hon. Gentleman will know that getting sign-off on a project such as this involves engagement across Government, including getting the Treasury's buy-in. Once that has been locked in, we can progress. I am confident that the whole of Government stand behind the project, which is important not just to regenerate places such as Cumbria and the north-west but to lock in the skills base that we need for our future. This is a very exciting project. It will be building long after the right hon. Gentleman and I have probably left this House, in many decades to come. Britain has been at this game—nuclear submarines—for 70 years, and it is not something that one commits to and then backs out of. We expect Australia, alongside the United States and ourselves, to be doing this for a very long time to the benefit of British jobs.

Mr Speaker >[Share](#)

I call the shadow Minister.

Chris Evans >

(Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op)

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I welcome the new Minister, the hon. Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge), to his place; I got on with all his predecessors and I look forward to our exchanges in future. As has been said, the AUKUS agreement is a game changer not only for our forces but for British industry. The Government have promised a jobs bonanza for generations to come in places such as Derby, Barrow-in-Furness and Devonport in the constituency of my fellow shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard). Will the promise be underwritten by contractual guarantees to ensure that future generations are trained in the skills that we need for this vital programme?

Mr Wallace >[Share](#)

It is already underwritten by contractual guarantees. In Barrow-in-Furness, BAE is recruiting for 11,000 to 17,000 jobs. Derby is investing for the next generation of reactor, and that is starting. The key point about AUKUS is that it not only gets a commitment from the Treasury and the Government for the British replacement of the Astute class but locks in the potential of the Australian supply chain and working together collaboratively on skills in both countries. That process is already under way, with £2 billion recently unlocked to start building the infrastructure needed in both Derby and BAE in Barrow, and that will continue. This is further down the path than the beginning, but the real work starts now.

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