

# Fresh fears over aircraft carriers

By Peter Dominiczak, Assistant Political Editor

TWO aircraft carriers costing taxpayers £6 billion are at risk of being late and over-budget, ministers have admitted.

Delivery of the two Queen Elizabeth-class vessels was given a "red" rating by the Major Projects Authority for the second year in a row.

It is the latest blow to the defence project, which has been beset by problems.

Defence cuts had meant that only one of the £3 billion carriers – HMS Queen Elizabeth – would enter active service. The second carrier, HMS Prince of Wales, was to be mothballed and used as a reserve vessel.

However, Philip Hammond, the Defence Secretary, suggested last year that he wanted the Royal Navy to use both of the carriers.

The latest "red" rating suggests that plan is in jeopardy ahead of the final decision on the carriers' future in next year's Strategic Defence and Security Review. MPs have warned that trying to rely on a single carrier would undermine Britain's ability to cope with

international crises. The MPA's second annual report detailed the status of 199 schemes across Whitehall departments, rating them on a five-tier traffic light system from green to red.

The decision to release the report on the day of the local elections results laid ministers open to accusations that they had attempted to bury bad news. Other projects rated as "amber/red" by the MPA included the High Speed 2 railway. Iain Duncan Smith's Universal Credit scheme was excluded from the review after it was "reset" following a series of delays.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said: "In November 2013, the Defence Secretary announced that the MoD and industry had renegotiated the contract for the QE Carriers. Based on a realistic cost structure for the first time, the contract now includes better cost-sharing arrangements to help keep the programme on budget and on track." Francis Maude, the Cabinet Office Minister, added that the MPA's reports had added transparency to the work of government which would drive up standards.



Going wild in the city

A staff member at the Sladmore Contemporary gallery in London with Brown Bear Maquette and Scottish Black Face Ram by Nick Bibby, whose show runs from June 5

# Hall jailed for 30 months more over sex assaults on teenager

The disgraced broadcaster Stuart Hall has been sentenced to a further two years and six months in prison for indecently assaulting an under-age girl.

The 84-year-old former *It's A Knockout* presenter was cleared last week of 15 counts of rape in relation to two women between 1976 and 1981.

But he was convicted by a jury at Preston Crown Court of indecently assaulting one of the complainants when she was under 16, and had earlier pleaded guilty to another indecent assault on the same girl when she was 13. The charge Hall admitted involved an incident at a dinner party where

he crept into his victim's bedroom and assaulted her.

Hall, a married father of two, is already serving a 30-month jail sentence after pleading guilty last year to indecently assaulting 13 other girls, aged nine to 17, over two decades. He had been due for release in September.

He will not now be eligible for release until December 2015.

Passing sentence, Lord Justice Turner called his offences a "horrible betrayal".

Hall sat impassively in the dock, with his head bowed, as he listened to the proceedings.

His victim sat yards from him and wiped away tears as details of the offences were mentioned.

# Young ones: half of London's workforce aged under 40

More than half of the working population of London is now under the age of 40, according to an official study that shows how the capital is attracting young talent from the rest of the country.

An analysis of the most recent census shows that the dominant age group in a typical London workplace is 15 years younger than elsewhere in the country for men, and as much as 20 years younger for women.

The study, by the Office for National Statistics, also shows that the proportion of university graduates in the capital's population is 53 per cent higher than the average for England

and Wales. The only other cities with a similar proportion of graduates in the workforce are Oxford and Cambridge.

The figures relate to census day in 2011, but the current contrast between London and the rest of Britain is likely to be even more marked, reflecting the speed of the economic recovery in the capital.

According to the study, 54 per cent of the workplace population of London is aged 39 or lower, compared with 45 per cent in the rest of England and Wales.

The study also shows that almost one in five workers in the capital was born overseas, four times the proportion elsewhere.

# Police chief calls for ban on protests by far-Right groups

Far-Right groups should be banned from staging protests because each one costs police up to half a million pounds, according to a senior officer.

David Crompton, South Yorkshire's chief constable, said the money could be better spent on other issues and urged the Government to make more funds available or consider changing the law.

The English Defence League has staged three large protests in Rotherham in 18 months.

Mr Crompton said such events were having a major impact on his force's budget. "Either

somebody changes the law so that it's less easy to do this or, alternatively, there are some funds available that we can tap into," he told the *Yorkshire Post*.

"As it stands, we have a lot of power over marches but we don't have in any way the same control over assemblies."

He said options restricting the right to assembly should be considered, but he recognised it was linked to freedom of speech.

Police already have the power to impose conditions on assemblies to prevent serious public disorder or damage to property.

# Childminders are rattled

Thousands of childminders are leaving the job because of tough financial conditions, it has been suggested.

There are now around 7,700 fewer childminders working with preschool children in England than there were five years ago.

Ofsted figures show that, at the end of March, there were 51,789 childminders on its Early Years Register, compared with 59,490 at the end of June 2009.

Liz Bayram, chief executive of Pacey, the child care association, said: "Whilst the economy is meant to be on the up, it's not trickling down to [our members] in terms of getting more work."

# It's all white not to be grey



Thought to be Britain's only albino squirrel siblings, these were spotted in Waterlooville, Hants

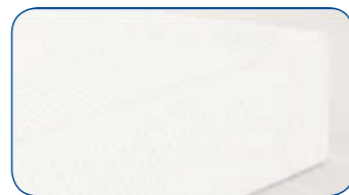


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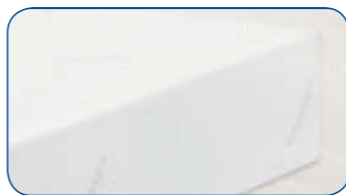


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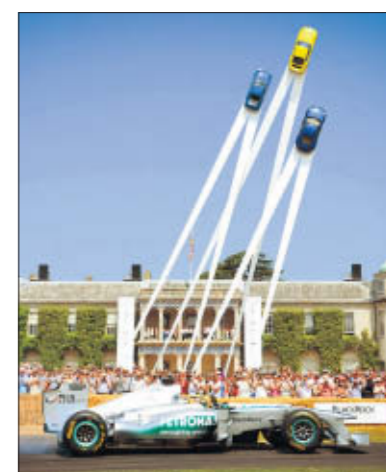
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The Daily Telegraph

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