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National flagship can be funded by private donors, says millionaire

Ian Maiden, who made his fortune in advertising, has spent £420,000 of his own money on plans for a replacement for HMY Britannia

By Christopher Hope, ASSOCIATE EDITOR (POLITICS)

24 September 2022 • 8:23pm



A businessman who has spent £420,000 of his own money on plans for a replacement for HMY Britannia is offering to raise £250 million privately to build the ship as a tribute to the late Queen and bring in billions of pounds of trade for Britain.

✓ Ian Maiden, who made his fortune in outdoor advertising, led one of 19 consortiums put in bids to the Ministry of Defence to build the new national flagship over a year.

The winning design was due to be unveiled in May, but the process has stalled because Russia's invasion of Ukraine has put the UK defence budget under strain.

New Prime Minister Liz Truss said in July that she hoped the ship - enthusiastically supported by her predecessor, Boris Johnson - will now be funded by private donors.

In an interview with The Telegraph, Mr Maiden said he knew of "four or five" high net worth individuals who could fund the construction of a new flagship, as long as they are given the signal to step in by central Government.

He said: "I can get four or five people who will come up with the funds. These are mostly household names in international trade in different spheres of activity. They will be prepared to step over themselves to support the project as a trade platform."



Britannia in Venice in 1985 | CREDIT: Georges De Keerle/Hulton Archive

The idea of using private money to pay for the new ship takes the programme back to 2019, where it was in 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic, when the Cabinet Office was seeking private backers.

Under Mr Maiden's plan, these business leaders could each put in around £50million to build the flagship, which would then cost about £20million a year of public money to run.

✓ His own substantial detailed design - submitted to the Ministry of Defence earlier this year - has so far personally cost him £420,000, "paid out of my children's inheritance".

Mr Maiden said that the wave of patriotism and goodwill since the late Queen's funeral meant that people would be open to a replacement for Britannia, possibly called "Elizabeth the Second" or "Great Britain", after Brunel's ship.

Mr Maiden, 89, first set up a company to build a new "national flagship" in 1998, a year after the yacht was controversially decommissioned by the Labour government.

Mr Johnson then adopted the term "national flagship" rather than a "yacht" when he revived the plans in May last year, saying that it would reflect "the UK's burgeoning status as a great, independent maritime trading nation".



An artist's impression of a new national flagship from May last year | CREDIT: 10 Downing Street/PA

Mr Maiden continued: "Britain is an island country. We are different from other nations and we should be proud of that.

"A national flagship as a trading platform is something that does not exist in the world. I visualise the importance of it and the unique characteristics of it, being able to visit a foreign port."

In its heyday Britannia was said to have been the catalyst for billions of pounds of inward investment deals and exports for the UK, when it held "trade days" for company bosses or

overseas trips.

He said: "I can visualise exhibitions, trade missions, cultural exchanges, sporting events, but primarily trade - it must be considered to be primarily a generator of goodwill toward Britain and the encouragement of trade."

Glamour and importance

He added: "It would speak loudly for Britain in a manner that would be difficult to match with other countries."

The new national flagship would have "a certain glamour and attachment of importance" to it, he said.

"You won't necessarily get leaders going to a big conference centre or a major hotel, but they're not going to refuse an invitation to attend meetings on board the flagship in the way I have described."

Mr Maiden envisaged "[the razzmatazz that would be associated with a head of state](#), entertained by perhaps our Government, or perhaps the royal family" on board.

"One thinks of the effect of Britannia when she visits anywhere with the Royal Marines band, floodlights, major receptions. The international press coverage would be the envy of the commercial world," he said.



The Royal family disembark for a banquet in Bergen in 1969 | CREDIT: Ray Bellisario/Popperfoto/Ray Bellisario/Popperfoto



New Flagship Company 1998 Ltd

A little background to our design concept submission may be of interest.

From: Ian Maiden, Company Founder and Design Leader

I registered the Flagship Company in April 1998 following the decommissioning of HMY Britannia the previous December. Whilst trade promotion was never a primary role, it was encouraging to see that £3 billion in UK trade deals were signed off on board Britannia during her last three years of deployment. It seemed clear that a dedicated trade promotion platform in the form of a British purpose-built ship would be a national asset.

With this in mind, I developed a speculative design for a New Flagship to build on the trade momentum that HMRY Britannia had achieved. I developed a concept with Jon Bannenberg with a brief to be a ship not a yacht. This was worked up into a concept design and was submitted to the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who set up a commission to examine our proposals – see attachment below:



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

10 August 1999

Dear Mr Maiden

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 9 July and the enclosed details of your "Flagship" proposal, which he found interesting.

The Prime Minister would like to have a fuller report on the feasibility of the project which, as you appreciate, encompasses the interests of a number of different Government Departments.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Stephen Byers, has therefore instructed his officials to set up a meeting with you and officials from other interested Government Departments to look at all of the details involved and the benefits and potential costs to Government.

The Chair of the meeting will be Ms Erica Zimmer, Director of the Metals, Minerals and Shipbuilding Directorate, who will be in touch with you shortly to arrange a mutually convenient time. Ms Zimmer is in Room 457, 151 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SS (Tel: 0171 215 1601).

Yours sincerely

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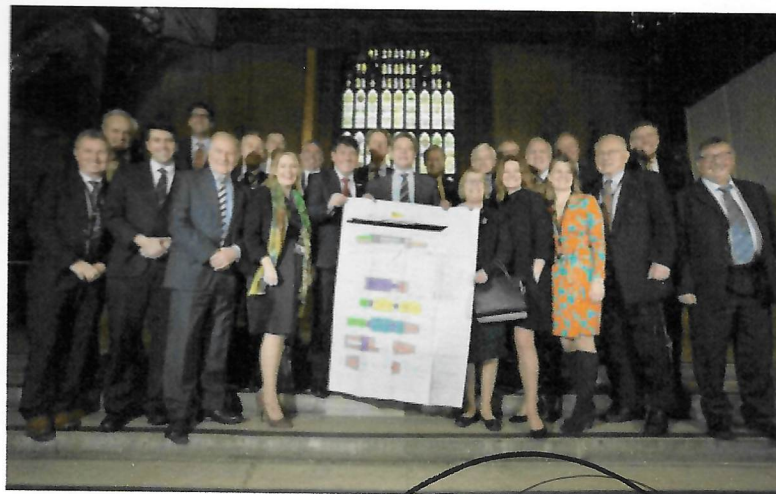
Ian Maiden Esq

I attended meetings and the delegates agreed that such a ship would be a good promotional platform and could be effective. Their collective view, however, was that a significant trade asset available to one and unavailable to other members of the EU would be unfair and not 'Communautaire'. We were turned down.

During the following years I advanced the argument for a Flagship and secured receptive press coverage. Throughout this period the press, the public and Members of Parliament have persistently, and wrongly, made reference to a 'new Royal Yacht'. It is only now that our consistent description 'Flagship', which we used throughout, has at last been accepted.

A recent and the longest serving Director General of the Commonwealth, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, approached us and asked to participate in our project (with vocal support at the time from his friend Nelson Mandela). The aim was to include Commonwealth trade interests within the UK-centric mission statement. Following three years of endeavour we and the Chief were unable to secure sufficient Commonwealth funding to enable the initiative to proceed.

Our parliamentary and press representations continued unabated. Our recent representations to MPs and selected Government Ministers, with the assistance of parliamentary Flagship promoters Jake Berry MP and later Craig Mackinlay MP, yielded results. Below shows part of a group of 50 supportive Conservative MPs in 2017 displaying one of our earlier profiles and general arrangement plans.



We sent hard copy of our proposal and ship design to Mr Boris Johnson when he was Foreign Secretary and he issued a press statement at the time supporting a ship as a promotional platform. We followed it up again when Mr Johnson became Prime Minister. His statement on 30th May 2021 included our nomenclature Flagship for the first time and our build estimate of £200 million plus.

Having been promoting the idea of a New Flagship since 1998, and, as a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron with its historical association to the Royal Navy, I decided to enter the design competition led by the Ministry of Defence.

As a small company, it was encouraging to see the reference in the PQQ that 'innovation and agility of small companies is recognised' and 'we are trying to structure the design competition to bring in small bidders. I also noticed a statement by the International Department of Trade which stated under the 2020/2022 Action Plan 'Government is open for business and intends to work with micro, small and medium-sized business.'

Regardless of these statements, we recognised that we needed to bring in outside expertise. For this submission we have assembled a team of partners who are leaders in their field. We have engaged the services of several specialist contractors and advisors to inform the architectural design, technical design and naval architecture, marine and electrical engineering, maritime safety, ship and naval security, asset management and procurement, as well as other providers of relevant disciplines.

Commitment by INEOS to hydrogen energy-sourced Chase Boats during their 2024 America's Cup Challenge has clear relevance to our technical submission. We have accepted INEOS to be part of our Team on account of their commitment to green energy and technical experience in the field.

Quite possibly most bid submissions will, to a greater or lesser extent, meet the purely factual requirements of the Brief but perhaps there is another matter of particular importance.

Public interest and indeed support for the project will need to be a major consideration and a vital constituent to the wellbeing of the project over years to come. We have strongly resisted any suggestion that the aesthetics should edge towards a superyacht in any way whatsoever. Any hint of encouragement to the inevitable detractors that the vessel is a 'vanity yacht' must be fiercely avoided.

In terms of style, I believe that few things date as rapidly as yesterday's 'aggressively modern'. The design is primarily functional and fit for purpose to fit the brief. We have resisted the easy option of establishing several upper decks for which superyachts have an indulgent reputation. Fewer decks permits enhanced headroom and increased natural light.

I have worked up our profile to look long, low, and beautiful. Because the lines are restrained, I believe they will not look dated over future decades. This seems important for what we expect over time will become the most recognizable ship afloat.

To emphasise 'Britishness' I included the Union Flag insignia on the radius of the quarters port and starboard, to be evident when lying alongside, but not ostentatious. We have also offered two options for the colour of the ship's hull. One, a very dark blue, almost black, which conveys an impression of serious intent. As a second option, we have explored a more pronounced blue which might invite interest, and which we believe would convey a sense of friendly welcome and inclusiveness particularly to first time visitors about to board. The colour would be picked up on ship's tenders and elsewhere on board as well as in communications and PR. We prefer that second option.

One GA feature which may be of interest lies within the Observation Lounge.



Part of this space includes an enclosed small bar area, a room with a warm and friendly atmosphere. This is the Union Jack Bar.

The Bar unashamedly flags up British achievements which led the world at the time and which benefit the world today. The first Covid vaccine, the World Wide Web, radar, and the jet engine spring to mind.

Is it fanciful to imagine a scene where major onboard trade negotiations below decks are drifting on and heading towards a breakdown? The two principals in the negotiations rise to the occasion. They head up to the Union Jack Bar. Over a couple of beers, within a relaxed and less competitive setting a solution emerges.

We offer our submission for the Design Concept in the belief that we have respected the elements contained in the Brief.

Ian Maiden



WELL DONE BORIS

ONE LAST PUSH FOR
BREXIT



Ian maiden @lannmaiden2 · 25/07/2019

This lorry-mounted billboard is the most recent part of my Parliament Square campaign started last year where the first lorry was seen outside the

Westminster. Have a look at my tweets. @BorisJohnson #brexit

#NoDealBrexit

AN MAIDEN

BEAULIEU



Tweet your reply

**BELIEVE IN BRITAIN
AND A MANAGED
CLEAN BREAK**

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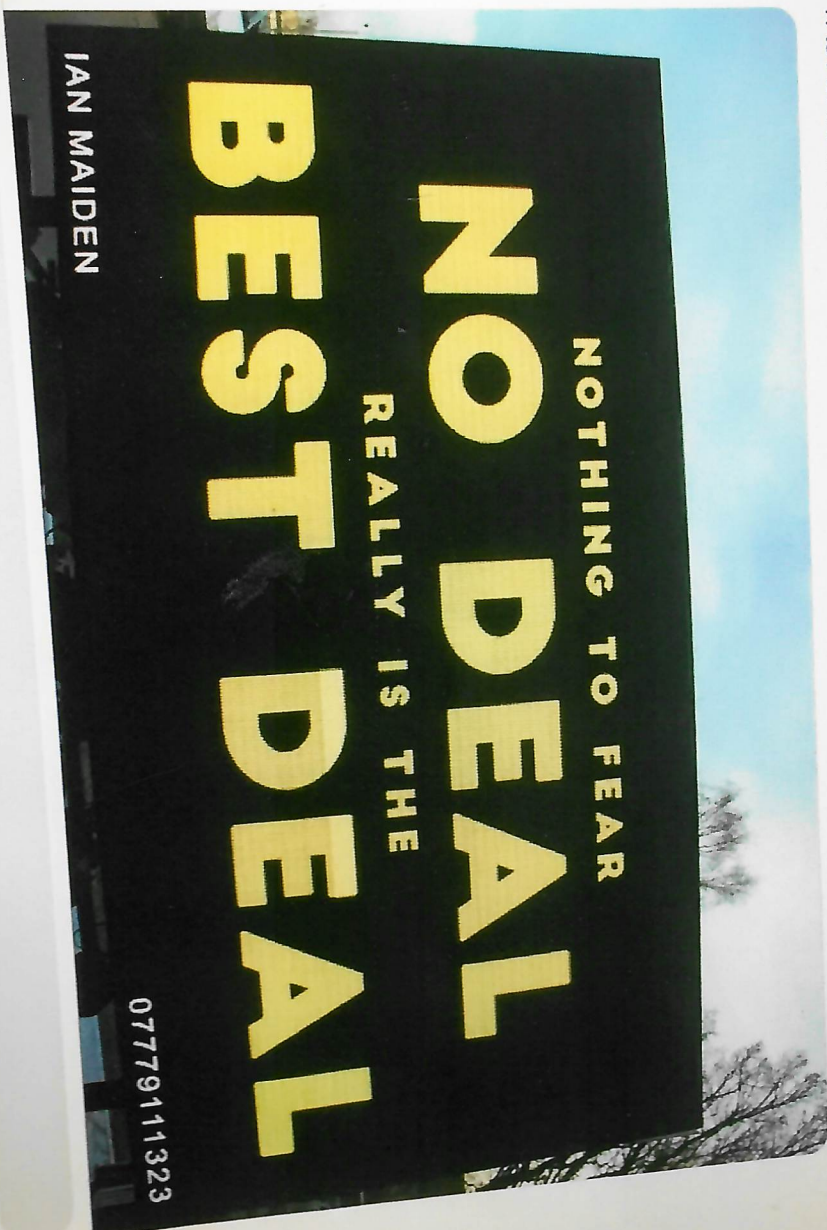
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ian maiden
@lanmaiden2

'Cash in when we crash out' is the hidden message in this poster in Parliament Square. Business entrepreneurs like me see a clean break as a golden opportunity for Britain and not a threat. That is what we voted for and no further delay please.
#brexit #NoDealNoProblem



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