

MOD announcement means closures in Edinburgh

✖ In plans announced today the Defence Secretary Michael Fallon claims that £140 million running costs will be saved over the next ten years.

The Minister said in the House of Commons this afternoon :
“First we will transform an estate built for previous generations of war fighting to one that better supports the needs of our armed forces. It will help deliver Joint Force 2025 by bringing people and capabilities into new centres of specialism clustering units closer to their training estate.

“Today based upon the advice of Chiefs of Staff I am announcing the release of a further 56 bases by 2040.”

Some of these are in Edinburgh and the immediate area.

The Ministry of Defence has announced that Craigiehall just outside the city boundary will be closed and then sold in 2018. All facilities will be moved to Dreghorn Barracks under the Army Basing Plan.

Redford Barracks will be sold off in 2022 by which time the 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland will be ‘reprovisioned within the Edinburgh area’.

The Redford Cavalry Barracks will be moved elsewhere in Scotland within the same timescale.

Glencorse which is home to 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland will be moved elsewhere in Scotland and the barracks sold by 2032.

MOD Caledonia in Rosyth will be sold off in 2022.

Elsewhere in the report provided by the UK Government it is provided that 'regional centres of mass for light infantry battalions supporting national resilience and community engagement' will be provided at locations across the UK and will include Edinburgh. We have no details at this time as to what that actually means in practical terms.

The Scottish Government has made a formal response:

The UK Government's decision to reduce Scotland's defence estate by 20% is a "huge blow for the country", Deputy First Minister John Swinney said today.

The UK Government has confirmed a reduction of a fifth in Scotland's defence footprint, closing a number of historic sites including Glencorse Barracks, Penicuik, Redford Barracks, Edinburgh and Fort George near Inverness.

The Ministry of Defence has also announced closure of MOD Caledonia in Rosyth, marking the demise of the Navy's historic presence in Fife.

Mr Swinney has called for the UK Government to urgently clarify the impact of the decisions, having failed to consult with the Scottish Government in advance of the announcement.

Deputy First Minister John Swinney said:

"Today's announcement is a huge blow for the country. Our defence footprint has been worn away through successive cuts, so it is unacceptable that the UK Government has announced a near 20% reduction to our defence footprint. This comes just three years after the last Army Basing Plan, billed as offering stability and certainty.

"These brutal cuts spell the near total removal of the Army from large parts of Scotland and the end of the Royal Navy's presence in Fife. It is deeply distressing to witness the announcement to close truly historic sites, such as

Glencorse, home to the Army for almost 150 years, and Fort George, a garrison for almost 250 years. Communities in Stirling and Edinburgh will also be disappointed to learn that the Army will be leaving Forthside in Penicuik and both barracks at Redford.

“The decision to cut these historic ties will be met with understandable anger in Fife, Midlothian, the Highlands and throughout Scotland. These cuts will have far-reaching economic and social impacts, placing jobs at risk, both directly and indirectly.

“Despite our best efforts, the UK Government has continually refused to engage with the Scottish Government ahead of these decisions being taken. It is vital that we now understand what this means in terms of personnel numbers and I call on the MoD to guarantee that Army units are not further diminished or moved out of Scotland altogether.

“Scottish Ministers and local communities have clearly set out our opposition to these cuts – it is deeply disappointing that Scotland’s views have not been taken on board.”

Local MSP Gordon MacDonald told The Edinburgh Reporter this evening: “The historic Redford Cavalry and Infantry Barracks have been part of the Colinton community for over a 100 years.

“With the closure of Craigiehall and Forthside Barracks the obvious choice for the Scottish Army HQ would be at Redford.

“The closure, when it eventually occurs, will be devastating for the local community. The buildings have category B listing and will prove expensive for any developer to convert into housing.

“I will be writing to the MOD to ask them to reconsider their decision.”