

Local MP says future of Redford Barracks still unclear



During a visit to Scotland this week for a meeting of the MOD Defence Board, the Defence Secretary Michael Fallon announced that the UK government would spend £1.7 billion on upgrading Scottish military bases.

He said: "Scotland is on the frontline of defending the United Kingdom from growing threats at sea, in the air, and on land. Our commitment to the future of defence in Scotland is underlined by increasing investment in better infrastructure for the Armed Forces helping to keep us safe."

Of this £1.3bn will be spent on upgrading HM Naval Base Clyde's waterfront, engineering support, accommodation and physical security ahead of the Dreadnought class of submarine arriving in Scotland from the 2030s. Other funds will be spent at Lossiemouth and Leuchars. The government said that it recognised the key military capabilities being developed in Scotland including the Active Electronically Scanned Array Radar for RAF Typhoons being built in Edinburgh.

The news of such a large amount to be invested here was not universally welcomed in Scotland.

Holyrood Veterans Secretary Keith Brown said: "The Defence Secretary's announcement of another £1.3 billion on infrastructure for the Trident missile-carrying fleet once again underlines the folly of spending countless billions of pounds on nuclear weapons at the direct expense of investment

in conventional forces.

“The announcement also fails to acknowledge that Mr Fallon recently made the most severe round of cuts to defence ever imposed on Scotland. Late last year, he announced a near 20% reduction in the size of the defence estate, closing historic barracks such as Fort George, Glencorse and Redford. His cuts will result in near total removal of the Army from large parts of Scotland and the end the Royal Navy’s historic presence in Fife.

“Scotland makes a strong contribution to defence and there is serious opposition to these cuts, which will result in many job losses across communities. I have personally met with local authorities from the areas hit hardest by these cuts and we requested that MOD Ministers meet the communities affected to discuss the matter. They have repeatedly refused to do so, and it is deeply disappointing that the Defence Secretary is still refusing to do so during his visit to Scotland.”

There was also a major Westminster parliamentary debate on the subject this week during which Joanna Cherry QC MP for Edinburgh South West called on the government to provide clarity and reassurance following their proposals to close Redford Barracks in 2022.

Ms Cherry explained that last November the UK Government published its report, “[A Better Defence Estate Strategy](#)” which earmarked eight military facilities in Scotland for closure over the next fifteen years. She asserts that the plan will have a huge impact on the ability to provide conventional defence and result in a loss of fifth of Scotland’s entire defence estate.

Defence Secretary, Michael Fallon claims the strategy will concentrate investment into fewer, better locations.

Speaking in the Westminster Hall debate, Joanna Cherry said: “The closure of Redford Barracks would remove a truly

historic site from the military estate and leave families who live and work in my constituency in a position of great uncertainty.

“The proposals in the publication set out a commitment to deliver: “Regional centres of mass for light infantry battalions supporting national resilience and community engagement,” but it is not clear which of the centres in Edinburgh the MOD plans to use for that purpose. The obvious choice for the Scottish Army HQ would be Redford barracks.”

During the debate and in letters to the Secretary of State for Defence and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Defence, Joanna Cherry continued to call for the UK Government to engage with the Scottish Government: “As the local MP for the area, I would be happy to meet the Minister to help facilitate constructive engagement between the UK Government, the Scottish government, civic society in Edinburgh and the relevant local authorities. To that end, it would be helpful if he could confirm when the consultation will begin, how long it will last and the format it will take”.

Following the debate, Joanna Cherry said: “Although the Minister failed to answer my questions direct, I am pleased that he has committed to write to me.

“As Redford Barracks has been situated in my constituency for almost 100 years, it is truly an historic site and remains an integral part of the Edinburgh South West Community. Redford should be seen as a key military asset to the MOD rather than as a commercial development opportunity.

“Given the cultural and historical significance of Redford, the UK Government must now enter into a period of active engagement with me and my constituents. I will continue to raise my constituents concerns until that commitment is met.”

