

Brown calls for MOD to think again on defence cuts



Government under pressure over defence cuts

The UK Government's decision last year to reduce Scotland's defence estate by 20 per cent was ill thought through and should be reconsidered, Veterans Minister Keith Brown claimed.

In November last year, the UK Government set out plans to close eight defence bases in Scotland including Glencorse Barracks, Penicuik, Redford Barracks, Edinburgh, Fort George near Inverness, and MOD Caledonia in Rosyth.

Mr Brown was in London to meet with the UK Government's Defence, People and Veterans Minister, Tobias Ellwood MP, to press UK Government ministers to come to Scotland to clarify the impact of their decisions.

He said: "I've repeatedly expressed my deep concerns about the UK Government's brutal cuts to defence bases in Scotland, as well as the total lack of engagement with the Scottish Government ahead of decisions being taken.

"These were the largest set of defence cuts made in Scotland and they will have a major impact on communities across the country.

"It is clear from my discussions with Tobias Ellwood that nearly eight months on from those closures being announced, the Ministry of Defence still has no answers on what this means for personnel numbers, where units will go, or the economic impact of their proposals in Scotland. The rationale for these closures is very questionable and I urge the MOD to reconsider.

“In April, the Scottish Parliament passed a motion calling on the UK Government to engage properly with the Scottish Government, local authorities and communities before the cuts go ahead.

“I am in London to urge MOD Ministers to act on this request and to ask Tobias Ellwood to come to Scotland to clarify the impacts of the plans. I am pleased he has agreed to come.

“With a new Strategic Defence and Security Review in the offing, there are already worrying rumours about deep cuts to the Army and the Royal Marines. The Scottish Government believes it is utterly wrong to slash personnel and conventional defence capabilities, while investing billions to retain nuclear weapons.

“I remind the UK Government of promises they made to reverse the decline in Scotland’s defence footprint and increase Regular personnel numbers in Scotland to 12,500 by 2020. I want to see this promise for Scotland honoured – it is disappointing that I’ve heard little evidence today that there is a concrete plan in place to achieve it.”