

# Edinburgh councillor calls for defence investment

**An Edinburgh councillor has called for the city to explore how it can grow its defence sector.**

Conservative councillor Neil Cuthbert has lodged a motion that would instruct council officers to explore opportunities for Edinburgh to 'benefit from increased UK defence spending'.

Cllr Cuthbert's motion also asks officers to explore the current contribution that Edinburgh makes to the country's defence sector.

The news comes as another councillor has lodged a motion calling for a ban on arms companies testing their equipment within the city.

He told the Local Democracy Reporting Service: "Edinburgh is uniquely positioned to capitalise on [new defence] investment through companies like Leonardo UK, which already employs 2,500 people at its Crewe Toll site and added 170 new jobs in Edinburgh just last year.

"These are exactly the type of high-skilled, well-paid jobs that benefit local people. My motion seeks to ensure Edinburgh doesn't miss this opportunity.

"I want to understand both the current economic contribution of the defence sector to our city and identify ways this Council can maximise future benefits from increased national defence spending."

The motion is Cllr Cuthbert's first at full council, having

started as a councillor in late January after a byelection.

Green councillor Alys Mumford struck back at Cuthbert's motion, saying: "At a time when Edinburgh Council is largely united in its calls for peace – particularly in Ukraine and Palestine – it's disappointing that Cllr Cuthbert would choose to use his first motion as a newly elected Councillor to instead promote industries which profit from war.

"With Labour at a UK level increasing defence spending at the expense of international aid, we really don't need the Conservatives to jump on the arms trade bandwagon as well.

"Greens will be opposing this effort to use Edinburgh's already stretched Council resources to fawn over one particular industry, especially one so morally dubious."

The largest defence contractor in the city is Leonardo, which employs around 2,500 people at a factory and research lab at Crewe Toll.

The site has been targeted by protesters against the war in Gaza in recent months, which has seen the entrances to the factory blockaded and the building damaged.

As a response, the company has erected razor wire on the fenceline surrounding the factory.

Leonardo's testing of communications equipment in the Braid Hills was the driver for Green councillor Ben Parker to file a motion calling for an equipment testing ban in the city.

He previously said: "It's completely inappropriate for public land to be used to support the activities of a company whose actions are directly fuelling the genocide in Palestine, and conflict in other parts of the world too.

"My motion – to request the Council reviews its park management rules to deny arms companies access to public parks for this purpose – is a clear action the Council can take in

solidarity with everyone affected by conflict around the world.

“The choice of Councillors is a simple one – do we take a stand against the arms trade, or do we continue to permit activities in our parks which put blood on all our hands?”

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter