



House of Commons  
Scottish Affairs Committee

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**Defence in Scotland:  
military landscape:  
Government Response  
to the Committee's First  
Report**

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**Third Special Report of Session  
2022–23**

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to be printed 5 September 2022*

## The Scottish Affairs Committee

The Scottish Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Scotland Office (including (i) relations with the Scottish Parliament and (ii) administration and expenditure of the offices of the Advocate General for Scotland (but excluding individual cases and advice given within government by the Advocate General)).

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### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Stephen Aldhouse (Senior Committee Specialist), Zoe Backhouse (Second Clerk), Pete Brook (Financial Analyst, Scrutiny Unit), Samantha Colebrook (Committee Operations Officer), Nerys Davies (Committee Specialist), Kay Gammie (Committee Operations Manager), Simon Horswell (Committee Specialist), Chloe Jago (Senior Media and Communications Officer), Alex Knight (Senior Economist, Scrutiny Unit), Leoni Kurt (Clerk) and Chloe Smith (Committee Specialist).

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# Third Special Report

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The Scottish Affairs Committee published its First Report of Session 2022–23, [Defence in Scotland: military landscape](#) (HC 82) on 24 June 2022. The Government Response was received on 8 August 2022 and is appended below.

## Appendix: Government Response

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### The MOD in Scotland

1. **Conclusion: Scotland is experiencing a new era of confidence and investment in the defence sector. We welcome the MOD's clear commitment to Scotland, shown, for example, by making it home to the UK's submarine service, the new fleets of P8 Maritime Patrol and E-7 Wedgetail aircraft and that Scotland will host a greater proportion of the Army, with an increase in the number of battalions, as outlined in the 2021 Future Soldier review. We also welcome the MOD's significant investment in Scotland, in particular in Argyll & Bute and Moray, and the economic benefits this brings to local communities.** (Paragraph 19)
2. **Conclusion: We welcome the increased military capabilities the MOD is gaining in Scotland, especially in light of ongoing increases in Russian aggression, and the importance that Scotland's military capabilities play in strengthening the UK's international alliances, such as NATO.** (Paragraph 20)
3. **Conclusion: We note that the 2014 commitment to increase the number of Regular Armed Forces personnel has been superseded by changing strategic priorities. We welcome the 2021 Future Soldier programme to increase the number of battalions in Scotland and that Scotland will host a greater proportion of the Army in the future.** (Paragraph 21)

### *Grouped response for 1, 2, 3*

MOD is firmly committed to the future of Defence in Scotland and its continued vital role in maintaining UK security. Likewise, we are grateful to the Committee for highlighting the positive role that the MOD and the defence sector play in Scotland.

The nature of defence is such that MOD brings investment to all corners of the UK and we are pleased that the Committee recognises our investment has changed and increased, reflecting a shift in strategic priorities.

The war in Ukraine has brought into sharp focus both the value of Defence and the importance of security: the UK public now better understands that levels of related investment matter. Maintaining technological advantage is a defining feature of our national strategy and prosperity agenda. We will continue to ensure that we have the right capabilities to ensure the security of the UK, support our national interests and safeguard prosperity.

This inquiry has further raised awareness of Defence's role and contribution to Scotland which is underpinned by the positive relationships between MOD, our Armed Forces, local communities and industry so that national security and our contribution to NATO and other international alliances can be maintained.

## Defence industry in Scotland

4. Conclusion: **We welcome the MOD's high level of spending with Scottish industry (around 10% of total spending with industry) but are concerned that this spending is very heavily skewed towards major international prime contractors rather than SMEs. This is illustrated by the fact that only 2.5% of the MOD's spending with UK SMEs goes to Scottish businesses. While this figure is higher than the MOD's spending with SMEs in the Northwest of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, it is far lower than both the UK average and Scotland's population share of the UK. Scottish SMEs have the skills and ambition to match any other part of the UK yet are losing out. While the MOD's SME Action Plan is timely and relevant, it is unlikely to tackle engrained hesitancy within the defence sector towards working with Scottish SMEs.** (Paragraph 32)

MOD notes the Committee's view and recognises the skills and ambition offered by Scottish SMEs. MOD considers the contribution from SMEs to our supply chain to be very important. However, we reject the Committee's view that there is an "engrained hesitancy" within the defence sector towards working with Scottish SMEs.

Scotland is very much at the forefront of defending the UK from growing threats on land, air, and sea; and the Government is supporting Scottish business and building skills to keep the UK safe, secure, and prosperous. MOD's commitment to the Defence industry in Scotland is absolute, reflected by a rising Defence budget which supports business, jobs, and skills UK-wide.

The Defence footprint is nationwide and in every one of the UK's regions<sup>1</sup> we are making a positive difference, with Scotland receiving the fourth highest proportion of the total UK MOD expenditure in 2021/22. The huge majority, three-quarters by value, of opportunities for SMEs in UK defence sit within the supply chain. The direct spend that the department has with smaller suppliers in Scotland is therefore not representative of the overall contribution that SMEs make to defence. It is for that reason that we are working closely with our major contractors to make sure that SMEs are supported throughout the defence supply-chain and that they have improved visibility and access to sub-contracting opportunities. Ensuring that we have robust data from our major contractors on how and to what extent they deploy SMEs, is a priority for us.

Improving SME engagement is a nation-wide issue and we are taking a national, rather than regional approach. The following are examples of how MOD are engaging SMEs across the UK:

- MOD's SME Action Plan is very firmly aimed at improving access to Defence contracts. The underpinning SME Working Group has given SMEs, including those based in Scotland, their own voice in the Defence Suppliers Forum (DSF) and provides a clear platform for engagement with MOD on SME issues and on the delivery of the Action Plan's commitments.

<sup>1</sup> Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland statistics are collated in regional expenditure analysis as regions.

- The Defence and Security Industrial Strategy (DSIS) outlined multiple initiatives, on top of the SME Action Plan, that were designed to continue to directly or indirectly support SMEs. For example, we have launched the Defence Technology Exploitation Programme (DTEP), a UK wide initiative which is designed to help SME suppliers join Defence supply chains.
- From June of 2021 the MOD extended the application of the Cabinet Office Social Value Model from procurements under the Public Contract Regulations to include Defence & Security Public Contract Regulations, so that social value policy outcomes relating to SMEs (where relevant & proportionate) form part of award criteria for competed procurements.
- Through the Joint Economic Data Hub (JEDHub) we are growing our understanding of the defence sector's contribution to the UK economy. The JEDHub Annual Economic Report showed the important contribution Scotland made to defence sector jobs in the UK. Through the JEDHub we will continue to grow our understanding of the contribution made by the UK defence sector to the economy, including in Scotland.
- MOD will continue to collaborate with industry stakeholders to share experiences of contracting with MOD and discuss barriers to opportunities.

5. Recommendation: *The MOD should, with the assistance of the Scotland Office, initiate a culture change process within its own ranks, and in its prime contractors, that addresses perceptions of engrained hesitancy towards working with SMEs in Scotland, with a view to increasing the proportion of SME spending north of the border to at least 8% by the end of the MOD SME Action Plan implementation period.* (Paragraph 33)

MOD notes the Committee's recommendation and welcomes further involvement from Scottish SMEs in the Defence supply chain. We will continue to champion and support Scottish Defence SMEs, in any, and all ways we can, to ensure they continue their vital role in supporting our Armed Forces.

MOD has a stretching but achievable target that 25% of its procurement spend will go directly and indirectly to SMEs by the end of 2022. We are making good progress towards this goal, and in Financial Year 2020/21, the latest year for which figures are available, 23% of our procurement spend was with SMEs. The commitments that we have made in our SME Action Plan will benefit all SMEs, including those based in Scotland, by removing unnecessary barriers to their participation in our supply-chain and by improving the way that MOD and its major suppliers engage and support them.

6. Conclusion: **The military shipbuilding sector provides an important pipeline of highly skilled jobs for Scottish industry. While current Royal Navy Type 26 and Type 31 orders are very welcome, the future of the sector is dependent on favourable UK Government policies and a regular 'drumbeat' of orders, which we will explore further in our inquiry into military shipbuilding.** (Paragraph 39)

7. Recommendation: *The UK Government should clarify definitively its position on whether current policies potentially allow for Royal Navy warships (such as destroyers, frigates and fleet solid support ships) to be procured and/or built overseas. If this*

*potential exists – which could have a dramatic impact on shipbuilding in Scotland – the MOD should indicate the likelihood of any of its warships being procured or built overseas in the next 30 years.* (Paragraph 40)

### **Grouped response for 6, 7**

The Government are grateful to the Committee for highlighting the prosperity benefits that shipbuilding brings to Scotland and MOD look forward to exploring this matter further with the Committee in due course. The recent National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSbS) Refresh indicated the importance of an indigenous shipbuilding industry which is relevant to both the character and pace of MOD warship procurement.

The NSbS Refresh also sets out a comprehensive package of Government support to further a shipbuilding renaissance for the whole of the UK, including Scotland. The strategy reflects well over £4bn of investment in UK shipbuilding over the next three years alone, including a range of opportunities for Scottish shipbuilders. The NSbS Refresh includes a 30-year pipeline of more than 150 new vessels for the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations, going wider than just Defence. Whilst the build location of specific vessels cannot be guaranteed, Scotland stands to benefit from this pipeline right across the supply chain bringing further prosperity to the region.

The Defence and Security Industrial Strategy (DSIS) removed the definition of warships as aircraft carriers, destroyers and frigates for procurement purposes only and therefore each class of ship will be determined on a case-by-case basis. The removal of the warship definition provides the MOD with greater flexibility in determining its procurement route, as all Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships are operated by the UK in support of our national defence and security requirements. From frigates to naval auxiliaries, they contribute to the wide range of defence tasks, in peace or conflict; and it is entirely logical to view them as component parts of a broad maritime defence capability.

As well as considering specific capability requirements and national security arguments, MOD will consider the long-term industrial impact of different options. The chosen procurement approach will be communicated to industry as early as possible to allow for forward planning.

The Committee rightly highlights the pipeline of skilled jobs that shipbuilding delivers for Scotland, and this is expected to continue as seen through the ongoing Type 31 and Type 26 frigate builds. The Type 31 has generated 150 apprentices and sustains around 1,250 highly skilled jobs, whilst BAE Systems currently employ over 400 shipbuilding apprentices and graduates, mostly in Glasgow, and aims to increase this to 800 by 2025.

### **MOD base closures and base expansion**

8. Conclusion: **MOD base closures, base expansions, speculation on base closures and reversals/ changes in basing decisions can all have major consequences for local communities in Scotland. All of the local authorities we heard from – regardless of whether they were facing MOD increases or decreases – desired greater collaboration with the MOD on basing decisions.** (Paragraph 60)



MOD notes the Committee's conclusion on the desire for greater collaboration and will continue to work closely with stakeholders on the release of surplus Defence land, including for city deals in Moray and Stirling, as we do with all Local Authorities in Scotland on the release of former military sites as well as the maintenance and development of the enduring Defence establishments in Scotland. The proximity of local authorities to their communities and their responsibility for delivery of local services is an important factor in our engagement with them. The same applies to other parts of the UK.

In rationalising the defence estate, it is understood that there will be both opportunities and challenges for local communities. MOD therefore seeks to engage and work closely with local authorities to ascertain the best planning solutions for surplus sites.

Basing decisions are made entirely on military requirement after considered assessment and scrutiny and MOD has had to make some difficult decisions to reduce the size of the defence estate in Scotland by four sites. MOD recognises that the impact of site closures will be felt beyond the Defence community and therefore will continue to work closely with local authorities to determine the impact of closure decisions while giving as much notice as feasible.

In the case of the four disposal sites in Scotland, MOD have been able to give between six and sixteen years notice of these base closures. This time has been put to good use to work in partnership on city deals, local planning allocation, and local planning documents that will see these sites realise new opportunities for the local community following military closure, and these helpful conversations will continue well into the future.

9. Recommendation: ***The formal partnership arrangement between the MOD and Argyll and Bute Council has been a great success and should be seen as a model for MOD interactions with Scottish local authorities. The MOD and relevant local authorities in Scotland should work together to increase the use of formal partnership arrangements.*** (Paragraph 61)

MOD thanks the Committee for highlighting the success of the Argyll and Bute partnership arrangement and is committed to working with Scottish local authorities including through the use of formal partnership arrangements where appropriate.

10. Recommendation: ***The MOD should intensify its collaboration efforts with all Scottish local authorities facing base closures or base expansions, and engage with them at earlier stages in those processes. The MOD should also work with Scottish local authorities to jointly produce, and act on, impact assessments to help ease local challenges caused by MOD basing decisions. These should be produced within a suitable timeframe to inform and enable appropriate action ahead of base closures or major expansions.*** (Paragraph 62)

MOD notes the Committee's recommendation. As indicated at paragraph 8, basing decisions are made entirely on military requirement after considered assessment and scrutiny. Local economic assessments are not routinely conducted. However, MOD will continue to work with local authorities to determine the impact of these decisions on communities and how we release surplus military sites for meaningful future use.

MOD already employs dedicated locally based estate leads for all of our sites in Scotland to facilitate regular engagement with local councils. These discussions are mainly to ensure

compliance with local authority statutory and regulatory powers such as town planning, environmental licences or the management of specially designated sites or buildings but are also likely to cover early engagement regarding strategic long-term development planning, and the options and potential for surplus MOD sites. Through these established links, decisions on the disposal of MOD sites in Scotland are communicated directly and immediately to the relevant local authorities to enable meaningful discussion at the earliest opportunity.

MOD also notify Scottish Government (SG) ahead of listing surplus land on the internal government register, and three months ahead of commencing wider external marketing. This enables public sector bodies in Scotland, such as local authorities and housing associations, to assess their requirement for purchasing these parcels of land – the results of which can be seen in the current sale of 38 surplus military houses to Fife and Moray councils.

## MOD collaboration with the Scottish Government

11. Conclusion: **While defence is wholly reserved to the UK Government, MOD decisions on military basing nonetheless have significant implications for areas of devolved competence, such as child education, healthcare and housing.** (Paragraph 73)

MOD was proud to launch the revised ten-year UK Armed Forces Families Strategy (2022–32) in January 2022. The Strategy and associated Action Plan acknowledge the devolved nature of many public services supporting families and have been developed through extensive stakeholder engagement, including with SG colleagues. We were pleased to receive Keith Brown MSP's written statement of support in the Strategy opening pages.

Regarding education, the Scottish Armed Forces Education Strategy Group (SAFESG), will continue its focus on a wide range of education issues affecting armed forces children, including its work to ensure effective communication about military basing between the single Services and SG. Chaired by SG, the group includes their main stakeholders along with representatives from the single Services.

Previous base expansion discussions have included the impact on education and early learning at HMNB Clyde. This education focused discussion at SAFESG, along with the engagement of the SAFESG Naval representative, facilitated MOD focused investment in the area (including through MOD Education Support Fund) and localised MOD resources and collaboration with Argyll and Bute Council. The funding provided by MOD enabled the recruitment of Service Pupil Advisors and Additional Support for Learning roles, as part of a package of measures to prepare for and support the transition of Armed Forces children into the area. The planned expansion activity at Leuchars (which will not occur prior to 2029) has been under discussion more recently.

MOD's Education Support Fund has also provided funding for a significant number of similar projects across Scotland, which focus on transition caused by exceptional Armed Forces family mobility.



On healthcare, the Defence People Health & Wellbeing Strategy, published in summer 2022, sets out how Defence aims to create, promote and maintain healthy lifestyles for our people. MOD works across policy, delivery and clinical teams to achieve this, including external departments such as DHSC, into NHS and the Devolved Administrations.

Governed through the Health Partnership Board, we will continue to work closely with partners in the Devolved Administrations to ensure continuity of care.

Where MOD accommodation policy impacts areas of devolved competence, the MOD will continue to engage with its stakeholders to ensure fair and equitable treatment of service personnel across the UK. In 2022 we will set out our Defence Accommodation Strategy that will set the vision of how MOD intends to improve the quality of Defence-provided accommodation, increase sustainability, and ensure the best use of our estate.

In terms of practical cooperation on the ground in Scotland, the “Firm Base” will continue its role in collegiately planning transitions – a tri-service construct, currently chaired by the Deputy Commander of 51st Infantry Brigade, with senior representatives from SG, MOD and Local Government. Scotland is divided into a number of ‘battlegroups’ which meet frequently to discuss issues and initiatives which benefit both the Armed Forces Community and the local area and report into the Firm Base.

**12. Conclusion: MOD engagement processes on military basing decisions currently take place predominantly between the MOD and affected local authorities and health boards. While this approach might work in England, in Scotland an adapted approach is needed in order to recognise the different regulatory frameworks and the role of the Scottish Government in devolved policy areas. Nevertheless, we recognise that engagement with local authorities and health boards is also important due to their operational role.** (Paragraph 74)

MOD acknowledges that basing-related engagement takes place at the operational level with affected local authorities and health boards; this should continue between Officials best placed to handle both the detail of infrastructure delivery and policy issues arising from it, where deliverability of the “offer” to our MOD Personnel may be impacted. However, we do recognise the role of SG in devolved policy areas, and we shall always endeavour where appropriate to ensure that there is constructive engagement with SG. MOD will seek to prioritise the development of improved knowledge and understanding across Defence where MOD business both impacts, and is impacted by, areas of devolved competence, building on extant Cabinet Office devolution training.

**13. Recommendation: *The MOD should increase its efforts to collaborate with the Scottish Government on basing decisions. This would facilitate improved information sharing, in both directions—for example, in relation to future basing intentions and the likely impact on local communities.*** (Paragraph 75)

We have had to make some difficult decisions to reduce the size of the Defence estate in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK. Whilst basing decisions are based entirely on military requirement after considered assessment and scrutiny, it is recognised that the impact of site closures will be felt beyond the Defence community and notification of decisions at the earliest possible opportunity is helpful.

Procedurally, a Ministerial submission is required for site closure decisions and includes draft letters to the relevant constituency MP (and Secretary of State where applicable) to inform them. Recommendations to inform ministers and/or representatives from the Devolved Administrations are also routinely included.

More generally all Ministerial submissions include a mandatory section on devolution related issues (which if applicable is completed) so that the devolved interests are taken into account.

14. Recommendation: *The Scottish Government must commit to properly funding local authorities and health boards local to military bases to ensure there is sufficient provision in place. This was not the case for dental and maternity services for military families in Moray. Both of these efforts would benefit military communities who rely on locally provided services, and Scottish communities nearby to MOD bases who share the same local services.* (Paragraph 76)

While outwith the locus of the MOD, I have asked my officials to share this recommendation with their SG counterparts.

## Movement of personnel in and out of Scotland

15. Conclusion: **While improvements have been made in this area—for example the Scottish Government's 'Welcome to Scotland' guide—there is scope for the MOD to be more proactive in the information it routinely shares with Armed Forces personnel and their families when they move to bases in Scotland, and from Scotland.** (Paragraph 91)

16. Recommendation: *The MOD should conduct a review of the formats and quality of information it proactively and routinely shares with all Armed Forces personnel and their families when they move to bases in Scotland, and from Scotland. The Scottish Government should also review their own information to make the transition for military families moving to Scotland easier. Particular focus should be given to the provision of clear information in relation to the implications of the differing child education, healthcare, tax and professional qualifications systems between UK nations. As part of these reviews, the MOD should ensure that 'best practice' is shared between Services and the MOD and Scottish Government should ensure that details of the three service Family Federations and SSAFA are proactively and routinely signposted.* (Paragraph 92)

## Grouped response for 15, 16

MOD notes the Committee's recommendation that there should be improved awareness amongst Armed Forces personnel and their families on the differing education, healthcare, tax and professional qualifications systems.

We are committed to continuing to work with SG, in close consultation with the single Service Families Federations, to refreshing the 'Welcome to Scotland' publication annually, to ensure that it contains the most up-to-date information on education, healthcare, employability and housing for Service Families in Scotland. We will continue to signpost it to our personnel, including through our HIVE<sup>2</sup> information services.

We will also continue our involvement in the SG chaired Scottish Armed Forces Education Strategy Group (SAFESG). This group has been in existence for nearly a decade and has been responsible for the creation of a significant number of parent focused guides on Scottish education matters.

The MOD will also continue to work with SG and other relevant stakeholders, to further embed the activities and resources developed by the National Transition Officer for Armed Forces Children – a Scotland based role, previously funded through the MOD Education Support Fund, which has been pivotal in generating high quality information to Armed Forces families prior to transition into and from the Scottish Education system. Most notable has been the creation of the Forces children's education<sup>3</sup> website, which provides information about Education in Scotland to families and support to Scottish Education professionals who support Armed Forces children.

The MOD will also continue to deliver its Information, Advice and Guidance function to serving parents, delivered through the Education Advisory Team (formerly CEAS) in Defence Children's Services. The content of its information will continue to be informed by the expertise of SG Education agencies represented on SAFESG.

**17. Recommendation: *The UK Government should accelerate work with relevant responsible bodies across the UK to reduce barriers that military spouses and partners face when attempting to transfer their professional qualifications—for example, teaching qualifications— between UK nations. In line with the Armed Forces Covenant, military spouses and partners should not be disadvantaged in their employment by virtue of their association with the Armed Forces.*** (Paragraph 93)

The Scottish Credits and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP), the Training, Education, Skills, Recruitment and Resettlement team (TESRR) of MOD and Skills Development Scotland, have collaborated to simplify the current system for mapping and translating qualifications gained in the Armed Forces and to help veterans. This work aims to specifically assist members of the Armed Forces and Veterans to map qualifications gained in service from the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) to the Scottish Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Service Personnel and Veterans can use an online bespoke tool<sup>4</sup> to identify the skills and qualifications they have gained in service and identify where their strengths lie. Spouses and dependents moving to Scotland, may also use the online tool to translate their qualifications.

In addition to the tool, SCQF have produced a range of resources to assist individuals<sup>5</sup> and employers<sup>6</sup> understand the transferability of qualifications within the devolved nations and Europe.

More specifically, MOD has been previously proactive with the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), engaging in detailed discussions with them on this very issue. As a result, a guide was developed by the MOD and approved by the GTCS which detailed

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3 <https://forceschildreducation.org.uk/>

4 [My World of Work](#)

5 [qccb-web-oct-2019.pdf \(scqf.org.uk\)](#)

6 [Know your Level – Job Roles | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(scqf.org.uk\)](#)

the relevant process for registration with the Council for those teaching professionals qualified outside Scotland. The MOD will reengage with the GTCS to identify any extant issues and seek to review and update the content of its guide, with the support of GTCS.

Accredited Governing Bodies and Professions set their own standards and qualification requirements. This is not an area where MOD has any jurisdiction, however, under the Families Strategy we work alongside Devolved Administration colleagues to improve awareness of differences. SG programmes, “Capitalising on Military family talent” and “Business in the Community (BITC) Scotland” highlight to business, the skills and experiences that partners and spouses of Armed Forces personnel possess. Other initiatives are being explored at working level, to further support this good work. This includes further promotion of the online translation of qualifications tool via the Service Families Federations, Forces Families jobs platform and the service HIVE information centres.

MOD promotes the Families Federations’ Forces Families Jobs (FFJ) as the “go to” platform for the partners and spouses seeking employment and training opportunities. The platform has over 12,000 vacancies, including SG jobs. Looking forward, MOD will support the Families Federations in exploring opportunities to expand across the rest of the public sector in Scotland.

The military co-working hub at RAF Leuchars goes from strength to strength and provides physical and online community working and support in a productive shared environment, encouraging networking and reducing social isolation.

18. Recommendation: ***We welcome the MOD’s annual payment to 7,000 Armed Forces personnel in Scotland. However, the Scottish Government should consider an exemption from the extra income tax in Scotland, and for the spouses of Armed Forces personnel.***  
(Paragraph 94)

Our Armed Forces serve the whole of the UK, so it is only right that they are treated equally and fairly wherever they are based. The professionalism, dedication and bravery of our servicemen and women can be seen throughout Scotland, the whole of the UK and across the globe.

We are glad that the committee welcomes our mitigation payment scheme which compensates those Regular Service Personnel required to pay higher rates of income tax in Scotland as a result of being resident in Scotland as part of their service.

I have asked my officials to share this recommendation with their SG counterparts.