

24 February 2026

Patricia Ferguson MP
Chair of the Scottish Affairs Select Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Patricia,

Thank you for your letter to me on 20 January 2026 following my appearance at the Scottish Affairs Select Committee.

You asked me to provide further information on how primes could be encouraged to work more with SMEs and how the UK Government could incentivise this engagement.

I'm delighted to get back to you and the rest of the Select Committee with some further information on this, as set out in the below recommendations:

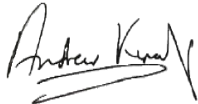
- Primes can look to split large work packages to reduce the burden on SMEs. For example, rather than 1 x £5m work package, it could be split into 5 lots. This would be far more accessible to smaller businesses and absolutely achievable if you're looking to buy Commercial Off-The-Shelf (COTS) or Military Off-The-Shelf (MOTS) equipment.
- MOD and Primes should focus on describing problem statements rather than specific platform solutions with SMEs in order to improve innovation and access for SMEs to contracts they otherwise would not deliver. Often there are limitations to SMEs when the end customer wants the same as they've always had, but cheaper or more complex. For example, a Prime should ask for capability solution to problem x, rather than asking SMEs to deliver a platform.
- MOD demonstrating leadership to primes by reducing onerous T&Cs and 100+ page contracts. This includes trialling the use of leaner, ten-page contracts used by major US companies such as SpaceX, to reduce burdens on SMEs.
- Primes to fund some 'Defence Ready' programmes, such as Make UK Defence's 'Fit for Defence' initiative to allow SMEs to get to a base standard where they are ready to work in the sector. This includes support in acquiring the correct accreditations, cyber security standards, bid writing standards as well as other business and manufacturing support.
- MOD should provide Primes with a long-term pipeline of work to ensure private sector investments can be unlocked, and the Primes must also ensure such long-term certainty is

passed through their supply chain, rather than ordering components boat by boat, or ship by ship, which also blocks SMEs from making their own private investments in people, infrastructure and innovation.

- Full engagement from both MOD commercial teams, Primes and tier 1 suppliers with industry led Meet the Buyer events. Additionally, Primes should ensure responses to SMEs in a timely manner and provide feedback– even if it's to say 'No'. Engineers, as well as buyers, should also be encouraged to engage with SMEs to understand what capabilities sit within the SME community.

If the Select Committee would like any further information on any of these recommendations set out above, please don't hesitate to contact me again as I'd be delighted to engage further with the Committee on this topic to ensure we properly support the fantastic defence industry we have in Scotland.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Kinniburgh'.

Andrew Kinniburgh BA, MSc, FIoD



**Scottish Affairs
Committee**

**Andrew Kinniburgh,
Director General, MAKE UK Defence**

By email only

20 January 2026

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for providing evidence to the Scottish Affairs Committee on 14 January 2026 in the first public session for the [*Securing Scotland's Future: Defence Skills and Jobs*](#) inquiry. [A transcript of the session is now available online.](#)

In response to Q33 posed by Douglas McAllister MP, you mentioned that primes could be encouraged to work more with SMEs. I would be interested in hearing how that should be done and in particular what you think the UK Government should be doing to incentivise such engagement?

I would be grateful to receive a response by 27 February 2026.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Ferguson MP

Chair, Scottish Affairs Committee