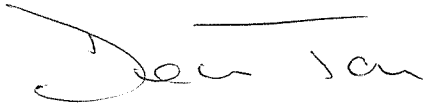


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13 March 2026



THE STRATEGIC DEFENCE REVIEW & THE DEFENCE INVESTMENT PLAN

Thank you for your letter of 03 March 2026 concerning the questions you have raised for the Department to answer on the process and decision-making around the Defence Investment Plan (DIP).

The issues you raise in your letter are important for us to address as we implement the 2025 Strategic Defence Review (SDR) and take its strategic direction and costed recommendations, including on capabilities, and turn that into an affordable delivery programme: the DIP.

In your letter, you asked six questions, which address six core issues across the SDR and the DIP, and I will answer each in turn, with as much candour as I can provide:

- 1) The SDR does not appear to recommend what the Armed Forces should no longer do, with no clear suggestion of what roles, capabilities, activities and support should be de-prioritised or deleted—what have you interpreted as being the down arrows within the SDR?**

The SDR signified a pivotal shift in the UK's deterrence and defence. It set five new ambitions (SDR, page 4): NATO First, the move to warfighting readiness, Defence as an engine for growth, UK innovation driven by lessons from Ukraine, and a whole-of-society approach. The scale of the task required to meet these ambitions is considerable, particularly around the shift to warfighting readiness, considering the previous hollowing out of the Armed Forces. The 62 recommendations in the SDR – all of which the Government accepted – make both explicit and implicit recommendations about what Defence should start and stop, and where its priorities must lie, such as shifting focus to the Euro-Atlantic over other geographic areas, and using the Defence Reform programme to reduce duplication across the department.

Tan Dhesi MP
Chair of the House of Commons Defence Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

2) Was it always your intention that capability decisions would not lie with the SDR Reviewers and if so, what consideration was given to the impact of having an external Review on the potential for delay to necessary capability choices?

The SDR made recommendations. Therefore, the recommendations around capabilities, including new partnerships with industry, radical procurement reforms, and updating conventional capabilities, remained recommendations only, until they were accepted by the Government. In the delivery of the 62 recommendations, the department can use the timing and sequencing of investments to reduce potential delays where appropriate.

3) At what point was the decision taken to create a Defence Investment Plan, replacing the Defence Equipment Plan?

In the SDR, I committed to the publication of a DIP that would supersede the old-style Defence Equipment Plan (DEP).

Now, the Department is working flat-out on the DIP, which we will publish as soon as we can. The published document will explain the result of the process the department has gone through to reach the robust decisions that support the development of both current and future capabilities. As the first zero-based review of Defence's budgets in 18 years, it goes significantly further than the last Government's DEPs. It will look across every budget line, including people and infrastructure, to give Defence a more adaptable basis for future decisions than the DEPs were able to.

4) Were the SDR Reviewers given figures for a fiscal envelope which took account of the costs of Afghan resettlement following the data breach?

The SDR Reviewers worked to the Terms of Reference (ToRs) that the review be deliverable and affordable within the fiscal envelope available to Defence. In the published ToRs ([Strategic Defence Review 2024-2025: Terms of reference - GOV.UK](#)), that was stated as within the trajectory to 2.5%. The Spending Review confirmed Defence's settlement.

5) Were any significant potential costs to the MOD budget discovered after providing the SDR Reviewers with the fiscal envelope upon which they based their costing calculations?

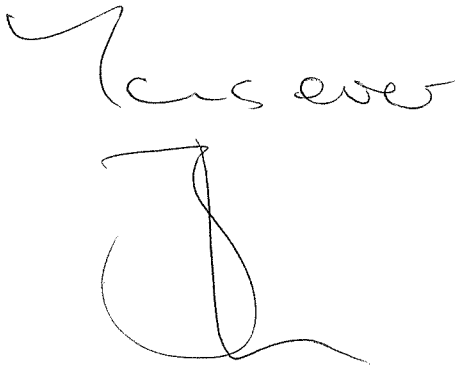
Given the volatility and uncertainty of today's world, and the rapid dynamism of the tech environment, it was inevitable that global events would occur between the establishment of the fiscal envelope and the publication of the document that could impact the costs of delivering the SDR's recommendations. However, this is what the DIP is for: ensuring that the SDR's recommendations can be turned into an affordable, deliverable programme to transform our Armed Forces.

Tan Dhesi MP
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6) Is it the policy of the Ministry of Defence to wait until everything is agreed before publishing the Defence Investment Plan, rather than taking the previous approach to the Defence Equipment Plan which made adjustments annually as required?

The DIP will detail the prioritised and sequenced capabilities and infrastructure the UK needs to respond to emerging threats over the next decade. It is designed to grow the UK defence industrial base, which supports jobs, innovation and exports. It will detail the investment priorities out to 2035, giving coherence and certainty to Defence industry. It will be a coherent and costed plan that is integrated across the Department of State, Military Strategic Headquarters, National Armaments Director Group, and the Defence Nuclear Enterprise.

The HCDC evidence session on 17 March will be attended by the Permanent Secretary, DG Finance, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Force Design and National Armaments Director. They have been copied on this letter and are happy to answer any further questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Healey', with a stylized flourish below it.

THE RT HON JOHN HEALEY MP
Secretary of State for Defence

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