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4 November 2021

Dear Sarah and Tobias,

As I have mentioned to you both directly, I am hugely grateful to the Defence Committee for their thorough inquiry and report, "Protecting those who protect us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life".

I have examined the report in detail and acknowledge that previously on too many occasions Defence failed to provide women with the level of support they deserve. I recognise that the lived experience for women is not yet good enough and this has to change.

I am driving the Department's response to go further in delivering against the findings of the Report. I have personally discussed the Response's initial draft with members of Defence's Servicewomen's Networks and have subsequently asked for additional work to be done.

The delay in responding represents my determination to ensure that the important issues highlighted by the Report are comprehensively addressed and that no opportunity is missed to bring about meaningful and enduring change. I hope we will be in a position to send you the Department's response by the end of November.

We are determined to continue to build on and accelerate existing improvements and use the Report to develop new strands of work. Ministers and Service Chiefs are fully committed and taking an active role in ensuring that our response is comprehensive, informed and that the positive outcomes have an enduring impact.

Given the importance of this workstream to Defence's personnel, we will also shortly post an update on our response on Defence's Intranet to ensure that the Service women who contributed to the inquiry are kept informed.

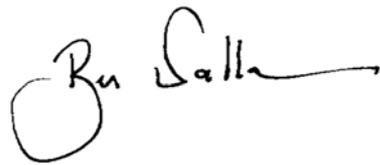
Sarah Atherton MP & The Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP  
Chair, Defence Sub-Committee & Chair, Defence Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

With reference to Tobias' letter of 26 October on other outstanding requests for information, I understand that the only outstanding items are further details you have requested on Type 23 and surface vessel service dates. These will be sent by the end of next week.

I am grateful to the Committee for their continued support on this important Defence priority.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Wallace". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**THE RT HON BEN WALLACE MP**