

Written evidence submitted by Midlothian Council (DIS0011)

Terms of reference: Defence in Scotland: military personnel and estate

The Committee is inviting written submissions which should focus on, but not be limited to:

- What impacts are the UK's changing defence priorities having on investment, employment and communities in Scotland?
- How important are military installations in Scotland for supporting the UK's international military alliances?
- How well are Scottish people and places represented in the UK military?
- How have recent military infrastructure investments affected employment and communities in Scotland?
- How might planned military personnel reductions and estate reductions affect employment and communities in Scotland? What impacts are already occurring from planned reductions/closures?
- Should the UK Government offer any additional support to individuals and communities affected?

Background

There has been a military presence in Midlothian from at least 1803 and the Napoleonic Wars when prisoners of war were imprisoned in Greenlaw House on the site of the future Glencorse Barracks. Glencorse currently serves as the base for the 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (2 Scots), and serves as a training centre for Scotland and the North of England for the armed forces.

Midlothian Council recognises and values the contribution that the Armed Forces make to the economic and community well-being of Midlothian. In January 2012 Midlothian Council signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant, alongside a number of other partners in the area including the Lothian Veterans Centre, the Department of Work and Pensions, NHS Lothian, Midlothian Federation of Community Councils, Midlothian Voluntary Action (MVA), and the Business Partnership representing the business community. This was with the aim of improving outcomes for serving personnel, veterans, reservists and their families within Midlothian communities.

Response to Consultation Questions

What impacts are the UK's changing defence priorities having on investment, employment and communities in Scotland?

The Ministry of Defence and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation published their Defence Estate Strategy in November 2016 'A Better Defence Estate' ([Better defence estate strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)). This identified Glencorse Barracks for re-provision in Scotland, and the established date of disposal as 2032. This was met with some trepidation from Midlothian Council in regards to the impact that this would have on the service personnel, their families, and the staff at the Barracks, and the subsequent impact on the wider Midlothian economy and communities. The economic impact of the disposal of Glencorse Barracks is unknown, but would be considered significant particularly for the communities of Penicuik and surroundings.

How important are military installations in Scotland for supporting the UK's international military alliances?

The fact that Glencorse Barracks is a regional centre for infantry training indicates that a sizeable number of personnel use this facility, who will subsequently be deployed in supporting UK's military alliances.

How well are Scottish people and places represented in the UK military?

Anecdotally it is estimated that a significant proportion of the Midlothian population are represented in the UK Military. It has not been possible to verify this through the ONS Business Register and Employment Survey however. Potentially the new census will be able to provide further information on this in due course.

How have recent military infrastructure investments affected employment and communities in Scotland?

The presence of the Armed Forces in Midlothian has had a positive effect on the economy and communities of Midlothian as the following examples state.

Midlothian Council was awarded the Gold Award under the MOD's Defence Employers Recognition Standard on 12 November 2019 from the Secretary of State for Defence, Rt. Hon Ben Wallace MP, which publicly recognised the Council's commitment to the defence community.

The award recognised Midlothian Council's activity under the Armed Forces Covenant in supporting forces personnel, veterans, reservists and their families defining Midlothian as an exemplar employer supporting defence. Midlothian Council continues to support the defence community as an integral and valued part of society in the course of their duties.

Principal underlying features of the award were:

- Completion of Scots Corner Early Years facility, a joint Forces/Community resource in Penicuik
- Agreement as to guaranteed interview arrangements for all qualifying Forces Leavers and Veterans
- Implementation of housing policy facilitating Armed Forces personnel accessing available Midlothian housing stock
- Continuing liaison on social welfare and education issues between Forces personal and Midlothian Council officers
- Development of employment placement potential projects with Roads and Parks departments and a further exploration of routes into employment for Armed Forces Leavers

In addition, the **Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund** has awarded numerous grants to Midlothian organisations with the most recent ones being noted below:

2019

- Anam Cara - £20,000 - a charity working with women experiencing low self-esteem, stress, anxiety or depression. Their pilot project will provide 10 to 15 women from armed forces or

veterans' families with a fortnightly support service over 20 weeks. The project will be delivered in partnership with Lothians Veterans Centre.

- Gorebridge Community Cares - £20,000 – to deliver cooking, "talking and doing" and informal educational workshops for veterans, armed forces personnel, their families, partners and the wider community. The project will be delivered in Gorebridge and Penicuik and aims to improve physical and mental health and employment opportunities.

2020

- Lothians Veterans Centre was awarded £19,302, which helped deliver help to 87 individuals. The vast majority of those individuals would be helped multiple times for multiple and changing needs.

In addition, the **MOD Education Support Fund** aims to help schools and local authorities mitigate the effects of mobility and deployment. A small number of schools in Penicuik received a total of £41,527 from the Fund for 2020 and £62,084 for 2021.

The effect of these initiatives and projects has had a positive impact on the Midlothian Armed Forces community involved in these, but also the wider communities and economy of Midlothian.

The Armed Forces provide representation on the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership Board and are locally involved with community engagement in Penicuik where Glencorse is based.

How might planned military personnel reductions and estate reductions affect employment and communities in Scotland? What impacts are already occurring from planned reductions/closures?

The Armed Forces personnel from Glencorse have integrated well into the communities of Midlothian. There are families from Fijian ethnic background who have settled in Gorebridge. This has added to the cultural diversity and well-being of Midlothian's communities. The facilities that MOD and DIO funding has paid for has benefitted the wider community as well.

As the disposal date for Glencorse is some way off the impacts of this are not noticeable just now, but we would call on reappraisal of this decision to close Glencorse, but if it has to happen, then early planning and engagement with the Council's Planning, Sustainable Growth and Investment Service and the Communities and Lifelong Learning service, would be our request. The Glencorse estate may have significant economic development impact post its MOD use should this still be on the cards.

Should the UK Government offer any additional support to individuals and communities affected?

Yes. Absolutely. There has been an Armed Forces presence at Glencorse for over 220 years. It is a significant part of Midlothian life. And it will be identified with the Armed Forces going forward. Support for individuals and communities affected would be essential. The Midlothian economy

would suffer otherwise, and it would be good to leave a lasting legacy of the Armed Forces in Midlothian, should the closure of Glencorse still come to pass.

Thanks for providing the opportunity to comment and for considering these views.

October 2021