

Aldermaston and the Defence Budget

In his speech in the House of Lords on 22 November Lord Boyce was cynical about the Government's promise that the replacement of Trident would not be at the expense of conventional forces. He accused the Government of using "smoke and mirrors" to conceal the real implications of the budget in the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The table below is based Des Browne's reply, on 30 October, to a question from Nick Harvey. The heading Trident Replacement shows the figures for "estimated costs of the programme to maintain the United Kingdom's deterrent capability beyond the life of the current system".

(All figures are £ million. The figures suggest that there is probably no overlap between the amounts allocated for Trident Replacement and for AWE.)

Nuclear Weapons Expenditure 2008/11 by year

Year	AWE	Trident Replacement	Other	Total
2008/09	800	200	<i>700</i>	1700
2009/10	900	300	<i>800</i>	2000
2010/11	950	400	<i>750</i>	2100
3 year total	2650	900	<i>2250</i>	5800

An earlier reply on 24 October by Des Browne to a question from Jeremy Corbyn indicates how much of this is new money, from "additional funding", and how much is from the normal defence budget. In the table below the figures in the "additional funding" heading are from this reply. In both tables the figures in italics are calculated.

Nuclear weapons expenditure 2008/11 by source

	AWE	Trident Replacement	Other	Total
Additional Funding	200	800		<i>1000</i>
Main budget	<i>2450</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>2250</i>	<i>4800</i>
Total	2650	900	2250	5800

There are two deductions from this:

- (1) As Lord Boyce suspected a large part, £1 billion, of the additional funding allocated to Defence is for the nuclear weapons programme.
- (2) Most of the substantial costs of developing Aldermaston are coming out of the normal budget, and not from this additional funding.

The Ministry of Defence have just submitted an application to build a new "High Explosives Fabrication Facility" (HEFF) at Aldermaston. The documents which are available online with this application illustrate the scale, not just of this facility, but of the overall plans for AWE.

The HEFF building will be a two story building with 5880 square metres of floor space. It will be used for the shaping and manipulation of high explosives for nuclear weapons. The facility will replace 24 existing buildings.

The Illustrative Framework Plan submitted with this application gives some insight into other proposed developments at AWE. The table below shows New Build Proposals in the AWE development plan 2005 – 2015.

AWE New Build Proposals 2005 - 2015

Type of facility	Aldermaston	Burghfield	Total
Manufacturing / Production	4	3	7
Testing / Research	4	1	5
Computing & Communications	3		3
Offices & Business Support	6		6
Environmental	2		2
Total	19	4	23

In addition this plan reveals that the MoD are also proposing to refurbish most of the main facilities in the High Security Area at Aldermaston and the current hydrodynamic research facilities. Most of the remainder of the Aldermaston site is marked as "Longer Term Redevelopment".

At a presentation to industry on 29 June at Abbey Wood in Bristol Nick Bennet, the Director General of Strategic Technology at the MoD, said that the Nuclear Warhead Capability Sustainment Programme covered "some 100 facility schemes focused at AWE over the next 20 years". (Document obtained by Scottish CND under the Freedom of Information Act)