

Atomic Weapons Establishment: Finance

Mr. Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the defence budget was spent on the Atomic Weapons Establishment in each of the last 10 years; and what the planned figures are for the next five years. [124588]

Des Browne: The percentage of the planned defence budget spent on the Atomic Weapons Establishment in each of the last 10 years is as follows:

	<i>Outturn spend as a percentage of the planned budget</i>
1996-97	1.3
1997-98	1.4
1998-99	1.3
1999-2000	1.3
2000-01	1.2
2001-02	1.1
2002-03	1.1
2003-04	1.1
2004-05	1.3
2005-06 ⁽¹⁾	1.8
⁽¹⁾ Provisional.	

The forecast percentage of the planned defence budget to be spent at the Atomic Weapons Establishment is 2.4 per cent. in 2006-07 and 2.7 per cent. in 2007-08.

This is due primarily to the

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programme of additional investment in sustaining key skills and facilities announced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Airdie and Shorts (John Reid) on 19 July 2006, *Official Report*, column 59WS.

We will continue the programme of investment in sustaining capabilities at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, both to ensure we can maintain the existing warhead for as

long as necessary and to enable us to develop a replacement warhead if required. This, and our plans for the maintenance of the independent nuclear deterrent were set out in the White Paper "The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent" (Cm 6994), published in December 2006.

Nuclear Submarines: Decommissioning

Mr. Dai Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the cost of decommissioning (a) nuclear submarine hulls, reactor compartments and propulsion reactors, (b) warhead design and production facilities at Aldermaston and (c) fissile material stores at Sellafield should it be decided to go ahead with a replacement for Trident; and whether any independent audit of such decommissioning expenditure has been made. [126307]

Des Browne: Paragraph 7-5 of the White Paper: "The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent" (Cm 6994) indicated that decisions on whether to acquire a replacement for the Trident missile are unlikely to be needed until the 2020s. The White Paper set out the decisions needed now to join the programme to extend the life of the Trident D5 missile and to start detailed concept work on new submarines to replace the Vanguard class.

The Ministry of Defence has made provision in its accounts for a wide range of nuclear decommissioning liabilities. The latest estimate of these liabilities is shown in the Ministry of Defence annual report and accounts for 2005-06, HC1394, which were certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General. More detail is set out in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Paul Flynn) on 24 July 2006, *Official Report*, columns 778-79W.

The estimate for the in-service costs of the UK's nuclear deterrent, once new submarines come into operation, set out at paragraph 5-14 of the White Paper includes an allowance for the decommissioning costs of a successor system. This estimate has not been subject to external scrutiny. At this very early stage, we are not in a position to provide a breakdown of decommissioning costs in the way requested. Investment at the Atomic Weapons Establishment has been increased in recent years primarily in order to ensure we can sustain the existing Trident warhead in-service for as long as necessary. This investment involves the replacement or

refurbishment of a number of facilities related to the design and production of nuclear warheads. Proceeding with the plan to replace our Vanguard-class submarines and participate in the life extension programme for the Trident D5 missile would not have a material effect on these plans. As the White Paper makes clear, decisions on whether and

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how to replace or refurbish our warhead stockpile are likely to be necessary in the next Parliament.

Facilities at Sellafield are the responsibility of the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency and British Nuclear Group Sellafield Ltd.

Nuclear Weapons

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for North Devon of 6 March 2007, *Official Report*, column 1877W, on nuclear weapons, what estimate he has made of the cost of decommissioning future (a) submarine reactor hulls and cores and (b) facilities used to create future fissile nuclear materials and nuclear warheads for any replacement Trident nuclear programme after 2055. [126918]

Des Browne: As I explained to the hon. Member for North Devon (Nick Harvey) on 6 March 2007, *Official Report*, column 1877W, the estimate of in-service support costs of the UK's nuclear deterrent set out at paragraph 5-14 of the White Paper, "The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent" (Cm 6994), includes an allowance for the decommissioning of a successor to the current system. At this very early stage, we are not in a position to provide figures in the way requested.

In 1995, the UK announced that it had ceased production of fissile material for weapons purposes. This moratorium remains in place, and we do not envisage any requirement to change this position.

The UK's current warhead design is likely to last into the 2020s, and decisions on whether and how we may need to refurbish or replace it are likely to be necessary in the next Parliament.

Trident

Dr. Gibson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the change in the cost of nuclear decommissioning liabilities which would arise from the replacement of the Vanguard class Trident nuclear submarines; what factors are included in the estimate; and if he will make a statement. [116644]

Des Browne: It is too early to make a reasonable estimate of the nuclear decommissioning liabilities associated with a new class of submarines built to maintain our nuclear deterrent. However, the nuclear liabilities in the Department's annual report and accounts for 2005-06, HC1394, include a figure of £333 million for all current in-service submarines, including the Vanguard class. More detail on the MOD's current nuclear decommissioning liabilities is set out in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Paul Flynn) on 24 July 2006, *Official Report*, columns 778-79W.

17 Public Petition,—A Public Petition from constituents from the Isle of Arran opposed to replacement of **Trident** nuclear weapons against the current **trident** nuclear missile system and any plans to update or replace that system was presented and read; and ordered to lie upon the Table and to be printed.