



Defence Diversification

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INTRODUCTION

I entered the Labour leadership contest as a candidate who is opposed to austerity, because it is possible to have investment to grow our economy and create decent jobs for all with a more equitable distribution of wealth. That is the central choice in the leadership election and the one facing Britain.

Job security in high skill, high paid, productive work is not just good for those workers who have it, but good for our economy too.

I am committed to ensure that in transitioning away from nuclear weapons, we do so in a way that protects the jobs and skills of those who currently work on Trident, and in the defence sector more widely. This will help grow the British economy.

The UK desperately needs to build its skills base and to invest in the industries that will take our country forward. That is why I have set out plans for both a [National Education Service](#) and for a [National Investment Bank](#).

For all these reasons, I have set out a clear commitment to establishing a Defence Diversification Agency to focus on ensuring a just transition for communities whose livelihoods are based in those sectors, so that engineering and scientific skills are not lost, but are transferred into more socially productive industries.

A huge investment in renewable energy networks, new and improved railway infrastructure, new housing, as well as upgrading our digital infrastructure are all necessary parts of that plan and will offer skilled job opportunities to those in the defence sector.

Additionally, the workforce in the defence industry will also have ideas about how the innovations you work on, and the skills you have, can be adapted to other social uses.

So a Defence Diversification Agency should not be some arcane Whitehall bureaucracy, but will be driven by the workforce and communities in partnership with government. We need a strategy to redeploy those skills to tasks that will build a stronger country for all and these are the issues that a DDA would be tasked with taking forward in practical terms.

From energy to the railways, from housing to digital infrastructure, the UK lags behind the rest of the world in our infrastructure. In Britain we do not lack for the innovators or inventors, but we do lack the strategic government and public investment to support them and to harness their skills and insights. Money saved by not replacing our nuclear weapons system could be used to sustain the process of defence diversification, vital to our manufacturing future, as well as freeing resources for investment in other socially-useful forms of public spending to build a sustainable future that benefits us all.

I am confident that we can make a just transition to a nuclear-weapons free Britain, and diversify more of the skills in the defence sector into more peaceful industries.

Jeremy Corbyn MP
Labour leadership candidate, August 2015

TIMELINES

In 2016, Parliament is expected to vote on Trident renewal. With a Conservative majority government it is unfortunately possible that such a vote will pass.

The next general election will take place in 2020. If a Labour government is elected committed to ending Trident renewal then we will enter government with a plan – discussed and agreed with communities, workforce, trade unions and industries affected over the next five years - for protecting skills and diversifying work so that no jobs or skills are lost.

Within the wider context of a new industrial policy, there will be investment to create more skilled science, engineering and technology roles.

JOBS & COMMUNITIES

Currently, across the country there are many thousands of workers who rely on the civil and naval nuclear programmes for their jobs and for retention and development of skill across many sectors. These include shipbuilding, aerospace, transport, mechanical and electrical design, project management and IT, as well as many more in the supporting supply chains.

If we look at the figures, Trident is estimated by the BASIC Trident Commission to cost £83.7 billion between 2016 to 2062, equivalent to £1.86 billion a year. At a total employment cost of £60,000 a year that annual expenditure would sustain 31,000 jobs. By contrast it is estimated that Trident currently sustains 11,000 jobs. For this level of investment, we should be creating far more jobs.

However, in some areas of the country Trident (and the wider defence sector) can be major employers – for example Barrow-in-Furness, Devonport and Rosyth. Commitments need to be made to not just maintain, but to increase skilled jobs in those areas, many of which currently suffer from higher than average unemployment.

It is projected that decommissioning of the existing Trident system under the ‘Submarine Dismantling Project’ will take 60 years - and so some jobs will remain in the industry for decades to come. We can also maintain jobs in the wider defence sector by ensuring Britain’s legitimate defence equipment needs are met from domestic producers, through better procurement policies.

The National Investment Bank, working with government departments, should have the mandate to invest to ensure that skilled manufacturing and construction jobs in areas like renewable energy and housing outnumber those lost in the defence sector, and are located in areas with a high density of existing defence work.

When the Tory government of the 1980s de-industrialised the North, and indeed many parts of the country too, they allowed unemployment to increase sharply to very high levels, which became entrenched.

Now the Conservative government's austerity programme has squeezed defence budgets and cut spending on conventional defence and conventional defence manufacturing jobs, while maintaining its commitment to Trident replacement.

We are proposing a careful strategy - backed by investment - to ensure a just transition, as part of an industrial policy committed to more high skill manufacturing jobs.

DEFENCE DIVERSIFICATION

Defence diversification is about working with workers in the defence industry to identify how the skills they have and technology they work on can be put to more socially productive use.

I have proposed that a Defence Diversification Agency (DDA) is established - jointly between workers, industry and government to ensure that jobs and skills are not just maintained, but also expanded.

Defence sector research and innovation has led to many advances we all take for granted today. As Professor Mariana Mazzucato has pointed out, if you take your smartphone, the touch-screen technology, GPS, the internet and voice activation - the things that make a smartphone smart - were all publicly funded, mostly for the military.

Working in partnership between the industry, the workforce, the national investment bank and expertise from our universities, we can ensure that new innovations can be explored and developed to maintain high skilled jobs. Many facilities in the US have successfully made the transition to a post-nuclear age, following the end of the Cold War, when funding was cut back. The UK government would need to learn best practice from these and other experiences worldwide.

Additionally, working alongside the National Investment Bank, the DDA can help those with transferable skills move into other high skill roles in the growing energy, housebuilding, and digital industries.

It is only a progressive government with an industrial investment strategy that can manage this transition while not only protecting jobs and communities, but improving skills and job prospects.

THE CASE AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS

We are making the case for a Defence Diversification Agency based because we have a moral duty, and strategic defence and international commitments, to make Britain and the world a safer place. As a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Britain should therefore give a lead in discharging its obligations by not seeking a replacement for Trident, as we are committed to 'accelerate concrete progress' towards nuclear disarmament .

Senior military figures have described our existing nuclear weapons as ‘militarily useless’; and our possession of them encourages other countries to seek a similar arsenal while undermining the efforts being made to advance the cause of international nuclear disarmament.

Many trade unions with members working in the defence sector oppose Trident renewal - including Unite, PCS and FDA. In 2013 the TUC Congress confirmed its opposition too.

CONCLUSION & FURTHER READING

In opposition, Labour should be working with communities, employees, their unions, industry and academic expertise to prepare a programme ready for implementation from May 2020 that protects skills and jobs in the defence sector, while ensuring a just transition to a post-nuclear weapons age.

Considerable research has already been undertaken in the field of defence diversification and looking at the possible approaches, and the impact and options of not renewing Trident. Some particularly useful studies are listed below:

- ***Trident & Jobs - the case for Scottish Defence Diversification Agency***
STUC, 2014
- ***‘Trident Alternatives Review and the future of Barrow’***
Nuclear Education Trust, December 2012
- ***‘Defence-Industrial Issues: Employment, Skills, Technology and Regional Impacts’***
BASIC Trident Commission, March 2012
- ***‘Trident, Jobs and the UK economy - a briefing by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament’***
CND, September 2010
- ***‘Cancelling Trident: The economic and employment consequences for Scotland’***
SCND/STUC, 2007

