New research, yet to be published, has exploded the myths about the number of jobs which depend on Britain's Trident submarine fleet. Claims that over 11,000 jobs would be lost if Trident were not replaced have been shown to be a gross exaggeration. Instead, renewing Trident will actually cost Scotland vital jobs.

The research shows that the actual number of civilian direct and indirect jobs in Scotland which are dependent on Trident is only 1386, and that these jobs would not disappear for at least 15 years. If Trident was decommissioned early to coincide with the planned build-up of 6 conventionally armed Astute Class Submarines at Faslane by 2018, then many of these job losses would be avoided.

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Funding redeployment and the regeneration of Scotland

Scotland’s contribution to the current running costs of Trident is at least £153m a year. The maximum number of Scottish jobs that would be lost through cancellation, direct and indirect, service and civilian, and on construction subcontract work would be 1,686. This £153m a year is already allocated within existing budgets and if spent annually in Scotland would sustain well over 4,000 jobs contributing directly to the productivity and efficiency of the Scottish economy.

On the basis of the existing skills of Trident employees, the research suggests that appropriate allocations of the £153m as follows:

- £10m to continue the employment of all 300 Scottish-originating naval personnel within conventional naval forces
- £10m to permit the redeployment of 300 MoD security personnel within local police forces and other work drawing on their existing training
- £20m a year to surrounding local authorities and social economy bodies for the development of general infrastructure and tourist amenities
- £113m a year to fund an Arms Conversion Agency that would focus on the development of employment in the area of greatest challenge for the Scottish economy: energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy generation. The work of this agency would be geographically focused on the lower Clyde and would generate jobs relevant to the skills of existing trades servicing Trident. The number would be well in excess of current employment.

Local Involvement and Government Intervention are the Keys

Experience from the closure of the US base at Holy Loch on the Cowal peninsula, base restucturing and closure at several locations in England and numerous base closures in the United States has revealed some important lessons. To be effective in mitigating the effects of closure or restructuring on local jobs and services, the development of a plan for re-use of facilities and redevelopment of the local economy and new industries and jobs must be started early and involve local community organisations, workers and firms. Above all they need the intervention of Government and significant resources to be made available to ensure there is adequate funding to absorb redundant workers into alternative jobs in the private and public economy. In the United States, the Base Re-alignment and Closure (BRAC) initiative has had a number of success stories. BRAC is governed by legislation detailing key processes which ensure that redevelopment plans must come from the local community. A Local Redevelopment Authority is formed which must include all major groups and communities affected. Central government has a clear role in facilitating this process. It can ensure fast-track environmental clean-up, funds to provide transitional support for displaced workers and economic planning grants, and ensuring that property changes hands below market value if it is for job creating purposes.

Marine power - a huge untapped resource

PELAMIS is a wave based form of electricity generation. It is composed of a series of semi-submerged cylindrical sections linked by hinged joints and overcomes many of the problems of earlier wave power devices caused by bad weather. It remains a technology in its infancy. Ocean Power Delivery directly employs 38 full time staff with comparable skills to those employed on Trident. It exported the first tranche of its production to Portugal. The Scottish Executive has recently announced a £13m investment in marine technology including the world’s biggest commercial wave farm in Orkney.

Scotland falling behind in Energy Research

Scotland’s spending on research and development is about half the level of the UK as a whole and only a quarter of leading OECD countries. And in the energy sector covering electricity, gas and water, research and development has been a major casualty of the privatisation of utility companies and the halving of their workforce over the past 15 years.

Although Britain doubled its investment in energy research and development between 2002 and 2005, it still remains very low in international terms. In 2005 total spending on all forms of energy R&D by state agencies, higher education and business amounted to £129m. The comparable spend in Germany was £513m, France £253m, the United States £3,017m and Japan £3,905m.

This stands in clear contradiction to the declared intention of the Scottish Executive to reduce the cost of energy, to reduce carbon emissions and to take advantage of Scotland’s unique geography and climate to become a world leader in renewable energy from marine and wind sources. In particular, the Executive’s target of 40% of energy generation by renewables by 2020 looks very unlikely without a major injection of funds for research and development.

If the bulk of the saving from current Trident expenditure - £113m annually - were to be focussed on energy efficiency and renewable technologies, it would bring Scottish spending into line with comparable economies.