



Starting a conversation
about being safe



Scotland's Part

A unique opportunity for a small country
to contribute to global nuclear disarmament



Secure Scotland is affiliated to UN House Scotland (SCO 48547) and receives financial support from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

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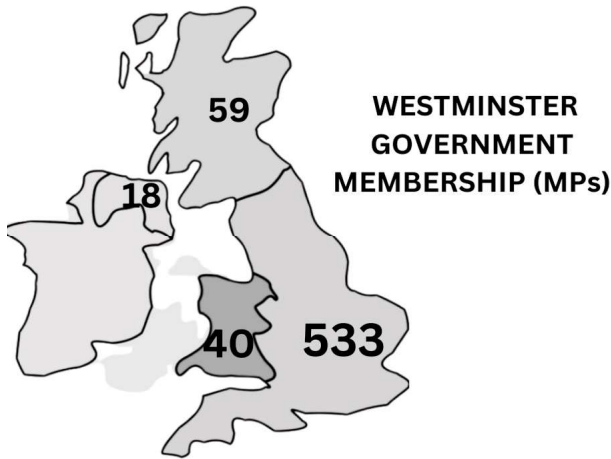
Starting a better conversation about keeping SAFE

A unique opportunity for a small country to contribute to global nuclear disarmament

All of the United Kingdom (UK)'s nuclear weapons are primed for use from Scotland's Faslane naval base which depends on the warhead store at the nearby Coulport site. No-one has come up with a viable alternative site elsewhere in the UK outside Scotland, and the Scottish parliament and government oppose nuclear weapons.



The Scottish Government has powers that have been devolved from the



UK Government, but the control over defence and foreign policy decisions are reserved to Westminster at this time. Scotland is represented in the UK Government by 59 out of 650 Members of Parliament (MPs). This often results in a democratic deficit. Even though Scottish people and almost all their MPs oppose nuclear

weapons, this fact cannot of itself change the nuclear weapon policy of both the UK's main parties (Tory and Labour). The fact that all the UK's weapons are deployed in a Scotland that opposes them exemplifies the democratic deficit. Removal of nuclear weapons could best, or at least most quickly, be addressed by Scottish independence. The UK Government is now very resistant to allowing the necessary process for a new referendum about Scottish independence, and is aware that this could lead to Scotland acceding to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) an international binding agreement that would require the removal of UK (or any other) nuclear weapons from Scotland.

"Security guarantees" references a national political idea, rather than the ordinary understanding of what gives people a sense of security. It is clear from the briefest examination of the risks posed to citizens of any nuclear-armed state that the presence of nuclear weapons puts people even farther into harm's way from a possible accident or from attack, while their social security is diminished through the lost opportunity costs. In particular, the UK's motivation for hosting nuclear weapons as their 'own', despite their dependence technically and physically on the US, has been about maintaining their colonialist status from the outset. (Ernest Bevin 1947, "We've got to have this thing over here, whatever it costs. We've got to have the bloody Union Jack on top of it.")

The US view in the period following the 1945 US attack on Hiroshima was that a nuclear plant in the UK would be 'insecure' - and incompatible with the proposals for international control that were under discussion in the UN Atomic Energy Commission, as the US wanted (and still does) to have total control over nuclear capacity. This was argued against strongly by PM Clement Attlee, in support of Bevin, as both were at that point even more convinced than the US of the need to combat Russian ideological influence and that a nuclear weapon would ensure that Britain could maintain its status as an imperial world power. Attlee and Bevin went so far as to conceal from government ministers in the Cabinet the decision to pursue development of nuclear weapons and the costs it would incur. A pattern was set when Truman was persuaded to cooperate with Attlee's nuclear ambitions because the inclusion of the UK scientists could accelerate the development of weapons.

In 2014 a referendum on independence for Scotland posed the question, "Should Scotland be an independent country?", which voters answered with "Yes" or "No".



The possibility of Scotland as an effective nuclear disarmament advocate was one of the agenda items in the public debate, although this was before the TPNW had been negotiated and adopted, and at the time, the supporters of 'No' were insistent that nuclear disarmament would not be automatic if independence was achieved.

In the period leading up to this referendum, the late John Ainslie undertook a rigorous programme of work which enabled him to provide

Scottish CND with invaluable resources. *Trident: Nowhere to Go* and *No Place for Trident* show that a Scottish government that could control policies on defence and international relations could not only insist that the UK removed its weapons from this country, but also initiate the elimination of the Trident nuclear weapon system in the UK. He additionally provided a practical guide to the steps that would need to be taken and the time frame for doing so in *Disarming Trident*, and, along with this earlier reports, a House of Commons Select Committee accepted his analysis. The Nuclear Information Service (NIS) has digitised the archive of reports John compiled and published them as the John Ainslie Archive. They are sited on the NIS website along with extensive citations and references. The original paper archive is preserved by the National Library of Scotland.

In John's words, we in Scotland had a "rare privilege, the power to cast a vote which would lead to nuclear disarmament". He asked us not to squander that opportunity, but the nation did, although the vote was close. When the world came together at the UN in 2017 to adopt the legally binding Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, many of us were heartbroken that Scotland was not in a position to sign it, and had thus failed to become the first UN member state to force a nuclear-armed state to disarm.

Scottish CND and the wider peace movement owe a huge debt of gratitude to John Ainslie. His painstaking work is as relevant as ever. The following summary aims to encourage its wider application. As the possibility of another opportunity for Scotland draws closer, let us ensure that this time it is not squandered.

The UK's nuclear weapon system is based on four intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) submarines, and a renewal programme to upgrade it is an ongoing matter of controversy, particularly given that the UK is a signatory to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty which carries an obligation 'in all good faith' to total nuclear disarmament. Since the US President Eisenhower and the UK prime minister Macmillan, agreed in 1958 on the UK government leasing US missiles (for what continued to be called a British nuclear weapon system), the independence of the UK's nuclear system, and scrutiny of it by the UK Parliament has continued to raise questions. This is still a problem today, with the replacement programme. However, the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is now in force and the UK government should urgently consider what will happen to any nuclear weapon system if Scotland achieves independence and maintains its intention to remove nuclear weapons from its territory and seas.

A report by the Royal United Services Institute said that relocating Trident would be "very difficult, but not impossible". No outline or reporting on how this could be done has been published.

To persist with this continuous at sea "deterrent" the remnant UK would require to find an alternative to Faslane as home berth for the submarines and a nuclear warhead store in place of Coulport. If such a relocation proved impossible for fiscal, political or practical reasons the UK would face the choice of attempting to negotiate the continuing use of Faslane/Coulport, developing a new land or air delivery system, or ceasing to be a nuclear-armed state.

It has been suggested that a future Scottish government could be required to lease the Faslane nuclear base to the rest of the UK, (the

“Guantanamo option”) in order to facilitate the entry by Scotland to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). However, membership of the TPNW precludes hosting any nuclear weapons, even for NATO partners, and nuclear weapons hosting is not a legal requirement of the North Atlantic Treaty, whatever the expectations of the US Government.

Thus, Scottish independence could lead to the disarming of one of the P5 nuclear-armed states, with the potential of triggering a benign domino effect on nuclear disarmament. It is this factor that has deepened and strengthened the role of nuclear disarmament within the Scottish independence movement. The aim is not only to rid Scotland of the internal threat from hosting the arsenal and the shame of being the delivery platform for a hideous weapon of mass destruction, but also to contribute to global disarmament.

There are basic criteria for an adequate alternative location which were applied to the original choice of site. A deep-water port accessible at all times is essential. The necessary warhead store, including its explosives handling jetty, would require the acquisition of an extensive site (Coulport takes up nearly two square miles). A key issue is the risk arising from the missiles and their propellant fuel. An accident with a missile could cause the release of radiation from the warheads and the submarine’s reactor. This means that both the submarine berths and the warhead store must be a fair distance from large centres of population. To propose placing them closer would be obviously irresponsible and would meet critical public and political opposition. Further, the submarine berths and the warhead store must be sufficiently close to each other that warheads can be removed from the missiles and replaced. The missiles themselves (leased from the US) are never removed in the UK. That task is done in the US, increasing the potential US influence over targeting.

Using the above criteria, all the suggested English or Welsh sites are deemed inadequate. Portland fails due to the absence of a nearby site for the warhead store. Using Falmouth would require the removal of two whole villages and the ruination of local tourism and the water sports industry. Barrow in Cumbria, where the submarines are built, looks likely at first glance but turns out only to have deep water access with a full moon and a high tide. Milford Haven in Wales would be ruled out since its use would involve the complete disruption of a key fossil fuel facility long before the UK will achieve transformation to a low emission state without oil or gas. Other options in England and Wales would involve the politically unacceptable use of large greenfield sites, while environmental protection requirements are even more stringent than at the time when the original decisions were made. Despite John's reports putting these facts into the public domain, and questions being regularly put to the UK Government from as early as 2011 about alternatives to the Faslane/Coulport complex, no credible alternative has been offered and the facts of John's analysis have remained undisputed since the House of Commons Select Committee accepted it.

Non-UK bases have also been considered. One option discussed is King's Bay in Georgia, one of the bases for US ICBM submarines. Such a move would further undermine any claim to operational independence for the UK's nuclear arsenal. The option of sharing the French nuclear weapon base in Brittany is politically beyond the pale.



As indicated above, if Scotland achieves independence, a remnant UK committed to Trident may focus on the Guantanamo Option - negotiating the continued use of Faslane/Coulport as the operational base for its ICBM fleet. In the current belligerent mood in Europe, the matter of NATO membership, supported by some anti-nuclear weapons independence supporters, financial inducements and political uncertainty will add to the intense pressure on Scotland to be distracted from its anti-nuclear-weapons resolve. Scotland's ability to resist is very much strengthened by the unambiguous and comprehensive UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), now in force for its member states, where any activity relating to nuclear weapons (apart from dismantling them) is banned. A Scotland that is in a position to accede to the TPNW and does so would not be alone in its resistance, but would have the critical support from the UN, and from all the Treaty member states who are committed by its terms to work for its universalisation.

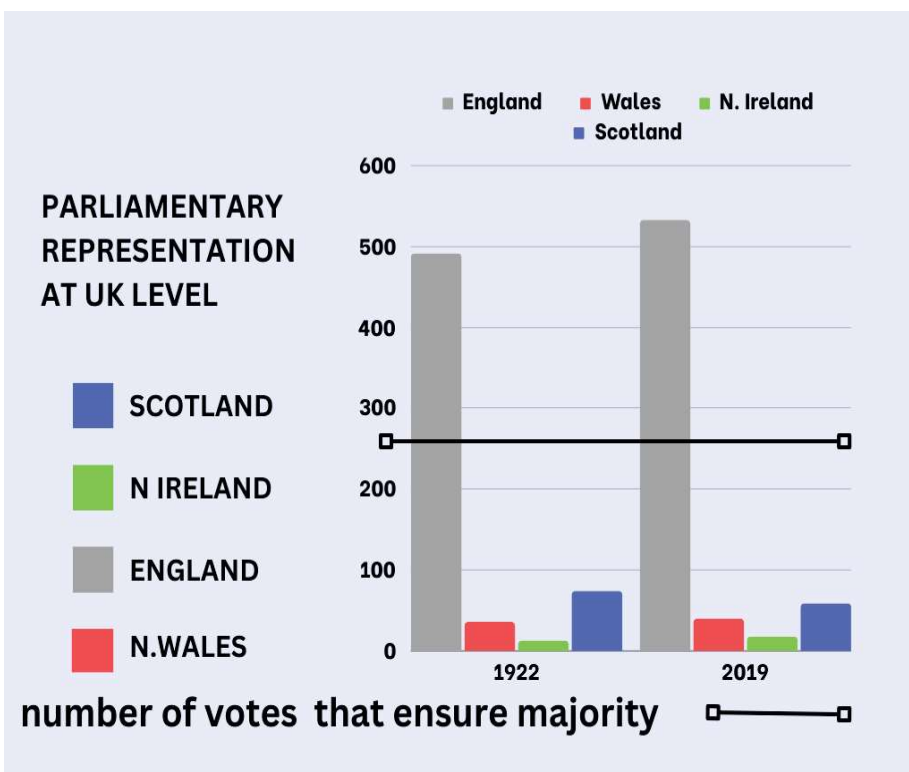
TPNW Article 4 para 4...each State Party that has any nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in its territory or in any place under its jurisdiction or control that are owned, possessed or controlled by another State shall ensure the prompt removal of such weapons, as soon as possible but not later than a deadline to be determined by the first meeting of States Parties. Upon the removal of such weapons or other explosive devices, that State Party shall submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations a declaration that it has fulfilled its obligations under this Article.

In John Ainslie's words: "Because there is no viable alternative site for Trident, Scottish independence could result in there being no nuclear weapons in Britain. This would be welcomed by all those around the world who seek disarmament, and it could encourage other countries to follow

suit. A Scotland which votes for independence and then sustains a clear policy of banning these Weapons of Mass Destruction will be able to set an example to the world.”

The Scottish political situation is also unique, in that Scotland plays host to nuclear weapons despite a majority of its elected Parliamentarians and the two political parties presently in Government in Scotland, opposing them.

The percentage of MPs that can be elected to the UK Government is too small to enable them to form a Government in the UK. If you live in England, there is currently no political party that could form a government that does not support the UK’s nuclear weapons policies. In Scotland, the SNP and the Scottish Greens currently support accession to the TPNW with Scottish independence as the quickest route to getting nuclear weapons out of Scotland. Other active Scottish parties that support the TPNW include the Scottish Socialists and Alba.



Even when 100% of Scottish Westminster MPs are in opposition to the ruling party they cannot change the position of the government directly. Their role there is to keep raising Scotland’s questions and concerns, and to highlight the lack of mandate the UK has for colonialist policies

and the impacts they have in the UK and around the world.

While English voters may choose to support Labour as the most likely political party to move its policy towards disarmament, (or away from racist policies on immigration and lethally irresponsible climate legislation) in Scotland there is a choice of political parties with a clear policy stance against nuclear weapons.

In every constituency in Scotland, we can give our votes to a party – or to a candidate - that actively supports committing to the TPNW directly and immediately and can be held to this position. This situation gave rise to the successful ‘nuclear weapons are my red line’ campaign at the most recent Scottish elections (2021) which delivered an increased number of ICAN Parliamentarian Pledgers at Holyrood including ‘rebel’ Labour party candidates.

In these dark and difficult days, our task remains critical: ensuring that everyone is informed of the positive future we can achieve, working to keep all new and existing parliamentarians aware of what can be done through the TPNW as it grows in strength and increases its impact and changes perceptions about nuclear weapons. This is particularly important now, as many parliamentarians who closely followed the emergence, adoption and entry into force of the TPNW are replaced.

Another significant consideration in the constitutional question for Scotland arises. The unionist case preceding the 2014 referendum was that continued membership of the EU could not be assured if Scotland voted for independence. However, the Brexit vote took the UK out of Europe, despite the whole of Scotland voting against leaving. This remains a contentious issue that independence for Scotland could resolve.

Nuclear warheads are the ultimate planet-risking expression of inhumane violence and can never resolve ideological difference. Their existence, regardless of use, prevents the urgent and necessary action on the climate and biodiversity, or any real respect for human rights. Scotland has a vital part to play in their elimination from our shared world.

Further information:

www.nuclearinfo.org

www.securescotland.scot

www.banthebomb.org

www.nuclearban.scot

www.icanw.org

See also:

Assuring Destruction Forever

on the Reaching Critical Will website <http://tinyurl.com/56kk5xch>

Bairns Not Bombs, the 'Spokesman' journal 153 issued by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation for more on John Ainslie's work and what it means today.

Angie Zelter's 'Faslane 365' and 'Trident On Trial' - testament to direct action and its effect in Scotland and are available from Luath Press (www.luath.co.uk)

Tim Wallis 'The Truth about Nuclear Weapons' and 'Warheads to Windmills'

Nukewatch monitors the nuclear convoys that transport the weapons to Scotland and what has been learnt from that careful observation (www.nukewatch.org.uk)

*MSP members of The Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Nuclear Disarmament engages with Government and Civil Society on nuclear issues and opportunities arising from the TPNW. <http://tinyurl.com/47nkdvhy>
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Onion seller image, courtesy of Alex Copland [metalixkinonfire](https://www.instagram.com/metalixkinonfire)

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