

LINDA GILROY MP

reporting back on

Defence Matters



Autumn 2007

Welcome to the first edition of what I hope will be a regular newsletter, keeping you up to date with my involvement – both at Westminster and in Plymouth – on issues relating to defence and the armed forces.

The constituency of Plymouth Sutton & Devonport includes the largest naval base in Western Europe, together with establishments for both the Army and the Royal Marines. Our city is home to thousands of service personnel and their families—and thousands more work in defence related industries. Many Plymouth veterans have served their country, and play an important part in our community.

I seek to represent all these interests in Parliament. I also have the privilege to sit on the Select Committee for Defence, watching over the work of the Ministry of Defence.



Above: Linda Gilroy MP meets with Armed Forces Minister, Bob Ainsworth MP.

This was the second time they had met to discuss the continuing Naval Base Review in less than a week. Linda was keen for the Minister to recognise not only what Devonport has to offer the Navy, but also the importance of the Navy to the local community.

...NEWS...NEWS...NEWS...NEWS...

Naval Base Review - A Good Outcome

The Defence Secretary Des Browne has announced that all three of the Royal Navy's main bases – Devonport, Portsmouth and Clyde – are to be retained.

The Government launched a review of the Royal Navy's existing naval bases with many observers predicting that at least one would be closed. The nightmare scenario for Plymouth would have seen Devonport-based ships and submarines redeployed elsewhere and the dockyard reduced to maintenance and training only.

However, the Defence Secretary told the House of Commons "The Review has looked in great detail at the manpower, skills, infrastructure and future requirement at each naval base, and has concluded that the best option for defence – and each of the local areas – is to keep all three open."

Linda Gilroy MP commented: "I was delighted at this decision about Devonport's future. The skills and flexibility of people who work there are second to none". However she did add a note of caution: "The Minister referred to some reductions in staffing. The fight therefore goes on, and one of the most important elements of this is to secure a commitment to surface ship work. This is something I will keep working at."

Turn over to read how Linda is fighting Devonport's corner >>>

Council Tax Rebate for Troops

Armed forces personnel serving in Iraq and Afghanistan who pay council tax on a UK property will in future receive a tax free rebate of £140, designed to offset 25% of council tax payments made whilst on deployment.



Labour & Co-operative Member of Parliament:

Plymouth Sutton

Compton

Drake

Efford & Lipson

Peverell

Keyham

St Peter & the Waterfront

Stoke

Sutton & Mount Gould

The Defence Select Committee

The Parliamentary Select committee for Defence consists of fourteen MPs from the three main parties and exists to scrutinise the work of the Ministry of Defence.

It operates primarily by holding investigations into policy or management; it consults with experts and interviews relevant individuals, before producing an authoritative report, including criticism and recommendations where valid.

Below: Linda visits British forces in Iraq with the Defence Select Committee .



Current inquiries include:

- **The Future of NATO & European Defence**

A comprehensive analysis of the Atlantic Alliance, its role, purpose and prospects, considering what role NATO should play in the future of UK and European defence, and whether NATO has a viable, long-term future.

- **Defence Equipment 2007**

The committee will look at the progress of some of the MoD's major equipment projects – such as the Navy's future carrier and the Army's FRES armoured vehicle – and will assess the performance of the new Defence Equipment and Support organisation. (DE&S).

- **Medical Care for the Armed Forces**

Examining the issues related to Service medical care, the treatment of injured personnel—from immediate treatment in the theatre of operations to after-care in the UK—and the facilities provided for them and how the Ministry of Defence engages with the National Health Service.

You can find out more about these enquires at www.parliament.uk or by contacting Jeremy Olver at olverj@parliament.uk

Devonport Strategy Group

Linda Gilroy took the lead in forming the Strategy Group that presented Devonport's case in the Naval Base Review.

The group includes fellow local MPs together with high level representation from the South West Regional Development Agency, the City Council, Devonport Management Limited and the trade unions.

With the threat of closure of the naval base lifted, the group will now focus on maximising the Dockyard's role in supporting the ships and submarines of the Royal Navy. It is working on an action plan to campaign for the dockyard's future prosperity – and to ensure benefits to the wider Plymouth community. It will also work to ensure that land release proposals, important for achieving the NBR efficiencies, are done in way that maximises benefit to the city—a base for the new marine partnership may be on the cards—which could strengthen our bid to secure the marine management organisation HQ envisaged under the Marine Bill scheduled for 2008.

The key to the retention of Devonport's of skills base will be winning work on surface ships “Like cars, new generations of subs have longer periods between service requirements, so it is essential for young submarine engineers to use their skills, to develop them and to have work that retains their interest. That is currently achieved primarily by enabling them to deploy their skills on surface ship work.

Contact Linda:

Linda welcomes correspondence from all her constituents – you can check to see who your MP by phoning 020 7219 4272 or by visiting at <http://www.upmystreet.com/commons/>

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For regular updates and background information, you may like to visit Linda's new website at www.lindagilroy.org.uk

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You can also find Linda on the social networking site www.facebook.com