Dear Julian,

Thank you for your letter of 18 June 2018 raising your concerns about Challenger 2 sustainability following the Written Ministerial Statement of 16 May 2018 which detailed the UK's recent Grant-in-Kind of spares to the Sultanate of Oman. I am replying on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence as this issue falls within my portfolio.

I can confirm that the British Army's own requirements were indeed considered before the Grant-in-Aid was authorised. On examination of this request, the Army concluded that these spares were surplus to requirement, and that granting them to Oman would not affect the operational capability of the Army. Although you are correct that the Modernising Defence Programme is still ongoing and therefore capability decisions are yet to be confirmed, the Army is confident both that current fleet size is sufficient to ensure the Army is able to meet the challenges asked of it; and that the existing spares pool far exceeds the Army's own requirements.

Yours sincerely,

Guto Bebb MP

The Rt Hon Dr Julian Lewis MP
Chair, House of Commons Defence Committee
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