



Defence Committee

Chairman, Rt Hon Dr Julian Lewis MP

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Rt Hon Mark Lancaster TD MP
Minister of State for the Armed Forces
Ministry of Defence
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2 April 2019

Dear Mark,

I am writing to express the Committee's concern at your announcement on 11 March of the forthcoming closure of Welbeck Defence Sixth Form College as a result of the adoption of the STEM Graduate Inflow Scheme (SGIS). The College is rightly proud of its achievements in increasing the diversity of entrants to officer training, and as competition for STEM graduates increases, it is surely unwise to shut down a means of creating graduates who have been working towards a service career from their mid-teens.

While we of course support the Department's efforts to sustain and increase the number of STEM graduates entering Defence, we are very concerned that closure of Welbeck College risks sacrificing an existing—and productive—source of STEM graduates in the hope that a new and untried system will be more successful. Our understanding is that the staff and governors were not consulted on the College's future and it does not seem obvious to us that the creation of SGIS requires the closure of the College. We would therefore be grateful if you could answer the following questions by 24 April:

1. Why you believe the end of the Defence Technical Officer and Engineer Entry Scheme (DTEES) and the creation of SGIS mean that Welbeck College must be closed?
2. How closing the College will help UK Defence "in an increasingly competitive market for STEM graduates in the UK and globally"?
3. Whether the staff and governors of the College were consulted before your Written Ministerial Statement, or whether they were informed of the decision without being able to influence your review?
4. Why you think that SGIS will provide better value for money than DTEES?

I should add that the Committee may take oral evidence if we do not consider the answers satisfactory.

*Yours sincerely,
Julian*