House of Commons
Scottish Affairs Committee

The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Terminating Trident—Days or Decades?

Fourth Report of Session 2012–13

Report, together with formal minutes

Ordered by the House of Commons
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The Scottish Affairs Committee

The Scottish Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Scotland Office (including (i) relations with the Scottish Parliament and (ii) administration and expenditure of the offices of the Advocate General for Scotland (but excluding individual cases and advice given within government by the Advocate General)).

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The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the internet at www.parliament.uk/scotaffcom. A list of Reports of the Committee in the present parliament is at the back of this volume.

The Reports of the Committee, the formal minutes relating to that report, oral evidence taken and some or all written evidence are available in a printed volume. Additional written evidence may be published on the internet only.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Eliot Wilson (Clerk), Duma Langton (Inquiry Manager), Hannah Finer (Senior Committee Assistant) and Ravi Abhayaratne (Committee Support Assistant).

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Summary

Nuclear weapons in Scotland could be disarmed within days and removed within months.

We accept the analysis of Scottish CND that, with the cooperation of the Royal Navy and the UK Government, this process would be both speedy and safe.

We recognise that such speedy action would inevitably create the prospect of unilateral nuclear disarmament being imposed upon the Royal Navy and UK, since the construction of facilities elsewhere could take upwards of 20 years.

Any insistence upon the speediest possible removal of nuclear weapons from a separate Scotland would undoubtedly have consequences for the negotiation of the terms of secession and upon a future separate Scotland’s relationship with other countries and international organisations.

Given that the people of Scotland deserve to know the full consequences of separation before, rather than after, they vote, we request that the UK and Scottish Governments establish the consequences of the removal of Trident as part of the whole secession agreement as soon as is practical, and for both to discuss with our international partners the impact of such an agreement.
1 Introduction

The Inquiry

1. In October 2011, we launched two inquiries into the Referendum on Separation for Scotland. We have published several Reports so far related to the first inquiry on the mechanics and process of the referendum itself. The second inquiry addresses the key substantive issues that need to be addressed if the voters of Scotland would be able to make an informed choice in any referendum, and in our ‘Unanswered Questions’ Report, we identified six areas on which we would seek evidence: the likely currency; Scotland’s relationship with the EU; pensions and social security; economics; citizenship and immigration; and defence.

2. Defence is a fundamental responsibility of a sovereign state and, as Professor Hew Strachan, Chichele Professor of the History of War, All Souls College, Oxford, told us: “if anything embodies what a state is and lies at the heart of a state’s identification, it is the armed forces and its capacity to defend.” Several witnesses into our inquiry commented on the vacuum of discussion on how separation would affect defence in Scotland, and in particular, the lack of developed thinking on how Scotland would manage its defence needs if it became a separate country. We think it is important to have an informed debate about how a separate Scotland might create its own armed forces; and the implications that might have for those who currently serve in, and benefit from, the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force in Scotland.

3. This Report focuses on one specific, but important, issue: The possible removal of the United Kingdom’s nuclear deterrent—Trident—from Scotland. We plan to return to other aspects of defence and Scotland, including the size and basing of any Scottish army, air force, navy and the possible future for HMBN Clyde—known as Faslane—and the over 6,000 jobs that it currently supports, in future Reports. We understand that our colleagues on the Defence and the Foreign Affairs Committees will carry out their own inquiries into how separation might impact upon related matters from the UK’s perspective. We visited Faslane and Coulport as part of this inquiry and would like to thank all those who were involved in making the visit possible.

The UK’s nuclear deterrent

4. The UK’s nuclear deterrent, Trident, has three components: the submarines, the warheads, and the missiles. The submarines are based at Faslane on the Gareloch, originally chosen as a base for Trident’s predecessor Polaris in the 1960s, and the warheads are stored in Coulport on Loch Long. Coulport is a Ministry of Defence Nuclear
Authorised site, subject to regulation by the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator and the Office of Nuclear Regulation.

5. The missiles are carried in the Royal Navy’s four Vanguard-class nuclear powered submarines. Each submarine can carry 16 Trident missiles and each missile can carry 12 warheads, but since the 2010 Strategic Security and Defence Review, UK Government policy has been to carry no more than 40 warheads per submarine. Trident is a joint venture between the UK and the United States. The UK has bought title to a number of D5 missiles in the stockpile, maintained and stored in King’s Bay Georgia.5 The UK contributes £12 million a year to the US as part of the running costs of this facility.6 There are no missiles stored on land at Faslane or Coulport, although there is the facility to do so if needed. The Trident D5 missile lifespan is expected to end around 2042.7 The warheads are owned by the UK, stored at Coulport and ‘married’ with the missiles on a specially constructed 85,000 ton floating dock. The warheads are transported to Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield, Berkshire, every three years to be overhauled.8

6. The four Vanguard-class submarines operate a three-part cycle: on patrol, undergoing maintenance, and providing training. One armed submarine is on patrol at any one time—known as Continuous At Sea Deterrence (CASD)—with a second submarine available to go on patrol at short notice in case the one on patrol is disabled.9 France and the US both operate similar CASD regimes.10 The submarines are based at Faslane but visit Devonport in England regularly to undergo maintenance. In addition to being home to the Vanguard submarines, Faslane is home to the Astute-class attack submarines, and soon will be home to the Trafalgar-class attack submarines, currently based at Devonport.11 This will mean that by 2017 the whole Royal Navy submarine fleet (all nuclear powered) will be based at Faslane,12 along with eight Sandown-class Mine Counter Measure Vessels. (See Annex 1). We were told that planning for this transfer, which will increase the workforce to over 7,500 by 2022, is continuing regardless of the referendum.13

7. The current Vanguard-class submarines are expected to be replaced by Successor starting in 2028,14 the Vanguards being retired one by one in parallel as Successor submarines come into service. The current Government is committed to the renewal of the UK’s nuclear deterrent and is expected to make a decision on the number of new submarines required to maintain CASD in 2016.15

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5 HC Deb, 16 February 2011 col 807W
6 Q 267; HC Deb, 30 January 2012 col 426W
8 CND Scotland, Disarming Trident, June 2012
9 Q 278
10 Malcolm Chalmers, Continuous At-Sea Deterrence, costs and alternatives, RUSI Briefing Note, July 2010
11 HC Deb, 6 May 2009, col 16ws
12 Q 321
13 Qq 322-325
14 The UK’s Future Nuclear Deterrent: The Submarine Initial Gate Parliamentary Report, May 2011
15 Ministry of Defence, SDSR Fact Sheet 10, Trident Value for Money Review. See also Q 1115—the main decision to go ahead with Trident was July 1980 and the first submarine became operational in December 1994.
8. Replacing Trident will not be cheap. The previous Government estimated the cost of replacing Vanguard at £20 billion—£14 billion for four Successor submarines, £3 billion for replacement or refurbished warheads and £3 billion for supporting infrastructure.\(^{16}\) The present Government initiated a Trident Value for Money Review which has suggested further savings, for example by reducing the number of warheads on each submarine and thus the necessary size of the stockpile,\(^ {17}\) but they still put the cost of the nuclear Successor programme to be between £11 billion and £14 billion.\(^ {18}\)

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17 Ministry of Defence, SDSR Fact Sheet 10, Trident Value for Money Review
18 PQ answered by Peter Luff. HC Deb, 11 June 2012, col 115W. Other figures have been quoted: “Top military chiefs go cold on nuclear deterrent”, The Independent, 26 September 2012, quoted £15 billion to £20 billion; and “After Trident: a well-made argument in a necessary debate”, The Guardian, 27 September 2012, quoted £25 billion.
2 Removing the nuclear deterrent from Scotland

9. Described by Professor William Walker, of St Andrews University, as the “heart and soul” of the Scottish National Party (SNP), the policy of removal of nuclear weapons from Scotland has been an aim of the SNP for many years,19 and is a core issue in the referendum debate.20 The SNP 2011 election manifesto said:

Our opposition to the Trident nuclear missile system and its planned replacement remains firm—there is no place for these weapons in Scotland and we will continue to press the UK government to scrap Trident and cancel its replacement.21

10. More recently, Alex Salmond, First Minister of Scotland and leader of the SNP, said that if Scotland voted in a referendum to be a separate country, then he would want a written constitution drawn up that included an “explicit ban on nuclear weapons being based on Scottish territory.”22

11. At its October 2012 Conference, the SNP agreed a resolution on Foreign, Security and Defence Policy that if Scotland became a separate state:

- a sovereign SNP Government will negotiate the speediest safe transition of the nuclear fleet from Faslane.

It also proposed a change in the party’s policy on NATO, such that a separate Scotland would aim to join NATO “subject to an agreement that Scotland will not host nuclear weapons” and only remain in NATO if NATO “takes all possible steps to bring about nuclear disarmament.”23

12. The UK position is clear, it does not want the nuclear weapons to move and Nick Harvey MP, then Minister for Armed Forces, told us that the UK is not making plans to move the nuclear deterrent from the Clyde.24

13. There is an obvious conflict here and we wanted to explore the practical implications of the ‘speediest safe transition’ of nuclear weapons, i.e. moving the missiles, warheads and submarines,25 out of Scotland, particularly as Dr Phillips O’Brien, Centre for War Studies,

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19 “Trident: at what cost would an independent Scotland refuse the nuclear option?”, Scotland on Sunday, 8 January 2012
21 Scottish National Party, Re-Elect A Scottish Government Working For Scotland, Scotland’s Place in the World, p.29
22 “Ban the Bomb from Scotland says FM”, The Herald, 8 October 2012
23 NATO debate at SNP conference: Politics live blog, The Guardian, 19 October 2012 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/blog/2012/oct/19/snp-conference-nato-debate-live-blog
24 Q 317. See also the written evidence from the Ministry of Defence to the Defence Committee inquiry, Defence implications of possible Scottish independence
25 The SNP Conference resolution said that if it acquired any submarines, they would be conventional ‘diesel electric’ submarines, and Faslane would be converted into the Joint Head Quarters for the future Scottish military.
University of Glasgow, pointed out: “You can define ‘speedy’ or ‘safe’ however you wish to define ‘speedy’ or ‘safe’.” Furthermore, as removing the weapons from Scotland is not the same thing as relocating them in new facilities elsewhere, we also explored what the UK could do to relocate Trident, how long and complex that might be, and what implications that might have for Scotland.
3 The ‘speediest safe transition’ of nuclear weapons from Scotland

14. In their publication, *Disarming Trident, A practical guide to de-activating and dismantling the Scottish-based Trident nuclear weapon system,* CND Scotland proposed a timetable to remove the warheads from Scotland should Scotland become a separate state:

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<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
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<td>Phase 2 Remove key and triggers</td>
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<td>Phase 5 Remove missiles from two submarines</td>
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<td>Phase 6 Disable nuclear warheads and remove Limited Life Components from Scotland</td>
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<td>Phase 7 Remove nuclear warheads from Scotland</td>
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<td>Phase 8 Dismantle nuclear warheads</td>
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15. John Ainslie from CND Scotland, explained the first stages of his timetable where Trident would be deactivated:

The initial step is that Trident could be deactivated, in a sense, so that it cannot be used within a matter of days. There is a trigger that the weapons operating officer presses and the captain turns a key. If you take away the triggers and the keys and you take the submarine off patrol, there are components of the missile that can be removed within a period of a day. That deactivates it in a sense so that it cannot be used in anger within a matter of days.28

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27 CND Scotland, *Disarming Scotland,* June 2012
28 Q 1059
It is also possible to remove other essential components that are required to launch the missile, but importantly, the system could be disabled with seven to eight days,\textsuperscript{29} and the main time limit at this point would be the time it took to recall the submarine that was out on patrol.\textsuperscript{30} At this point the process is comparatively easily reversible, unless the keys and triggers are separated at a verified distance from the submarine.

16. The next step is to remove the warheads from the missiles, which Mr Ainslie estimated would take about eight to ten weeks:

You have got nuclear warheads that are on top of the missile. The numbers are highly classified, but, in practice, say that they are down to eight missiles in each submarine. You have three armed submarines, each of which has eight missiles and each missile has five nuclear warheads. Current practice in Britain on safety grounds is that they install and remove the warheads while they are on the missile on the submarine. The first stage is you take all the warheads off one submarine. The time for each is seven to 10 days. I say that because, again, I watched them loading a Vanguard in December 1994 before its first patrol. It was taking them about a week to 10 days. They were carrying slightly more than they carry now—they were loading 60 at that point. Each one would take about a week, so, in theory, with three submarines, you could do it in three weeks, but, again, because of the safety considerations, it is quite a big operation; it is not just something you can take on tomorrow. Eight weeks is building in a longer period. It is one week, for each of three submarines.\textsuperscript{31}

The removal of warheads from three submarines would be limited by there not being enough space and staff at Coulport to work on them all at the same time.\textsuperscript{32} Removal of the warheads is a sensitive process that would have to be undertaken by specialist staff from the Ministry of Defence and Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston,\textsuperscript{33} and then transported out of Scotland. Until then, all the relevant parts are still in Coulport. Subject to verification, the warheads could be physically moved out of Scotland in two years.\textsuperscript{34}

17. The two year figure was based on moving nine or ten warheads a month out of Scotland from a current stockpile of 225.\textsuperscript{35} The speed at which the warheads can be moved being determined by the speed and frequency of the convoys that would carry the warheads safely and securely to AWE Burghfield in England:

They used to take three days to drive up and three days to drive down, so it was at least a week’s operation every time. They are now quicker, but, even so, we have to allow time for the crew and for training. That would be having the vehicles operationally on the road for possibly a week every month and then three weeks’
build up. There are clearly lots of safety and security concerns about moving nuclear warheads.36

18. All the warheads would be out of Scotland with two years. In a further two years the warheads could be put beyond use but that would have to take place in England. Mr Ainslie was clear that this timetable only concerned removing the nuclear warheads from Scotland, not the time to decommission Coulport.37 Similarly, the estimated cost would be an extrapolation of the running costs of the UK nuclear weapons programmes enhanced by extra staff and extra convoys,38 and not the costs of decommissioning.

19. Mr Ainslie had shown his timetable to various experts, including Bruce Blair, “the leading world expert on de-alerting nuclear forces in America” and Professor Richard Garwin from the US nuclear weapons establishment—both had agreed the time table is credible.39 In fact, while Mr Ainslie conceded that some of the timings had to be estimated, Bruce Blair had told him that the CND timetable was a “safe and reasonable way of doing it”, but it might be possible to carry out the process more quickly.40 Professor William Walker, School of International Relations, University of St Andrews, agreed the CND Scotland timetable to remove all the warheads from Scotland within two years was feasible, but it would require the UK and Scottish Governments to work together:

Again, it comes back to political will, and it would have to be done consensually. You would need a lot of co-operation between the two sides to make it workable, but if that was what the two sides wanted to do, it could be done.41

20. And he emphasised the need for co-operation, because the UK was the nuclear power:

Again, the “24 months” relies upon complete co-operation between the two sides and agreement on it. [...] All the sensitive stuff would have to be under the complete control of the UK Government; Scottish hands could not be on it.42

21. It is possible to deactivate Trident within a matter of days, and for the nuclear warheads, missiles and submarines to be removed from Scotland within twenty four months.

22. Scotland could not carry out this process by itself as all handling and transport of the warheads must be carried out by specialist staff from the UK. It would require full co-operation between the UK and Scottish Governments.

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36 Q 1066
37 Q 1078
38 Qq 1134-1135
39 Q 1059, Q 1064, Qq1066-1069 and Q 1400
40 Q 1059. See also Qq 1062-1063, and Q 1085
41 Q 1400
42 Q 1415
What would happen to the UK’s nuclear deterrent?

23. There may be other ways to remove the nuclear weapons from Scotland. The armed submarine on patrol could remain on patrol for a period of time, but this could only be a short term option because of certain limiting factors, such as the provision of food and water for the submariners, the need for the submarine to undergo general maintenance, and importantly the time-dependent components of the warhead. Coulport has unique facilities and trained specialist staff to handle the warheads as safely as possible. Coulport is the safest place for the submarines to return to. However, if a newly-separate Scotland was to insist on the process to remove Trident from the Clyde with the consequences as described by CND Scotland, it would necessitate the Vanguard-class submarines returning to Coulport so that the warheads could be removed safely, and thereafter the submarines would no longer be available to go out on patrol.

24. Therefore, a short timetable could force an interruption in CASD and, as Professor Malcolm Chalmers, Research Director, UK Defence Policy, Royal United Services Institute, said, the UK would be given little choice:

   The first thing it would do is take the warheads to Aldermaston and basically continuous at-sea deterrence would end. Then the Navy would be asked, “How long is it going to take you to regain this?” The politicians would be asked, “What political price and financial price are you prepared to pay to restore continuous at-sea deterrence?”

25. The result, if the weapons were forced to leave Scotland too quickly, would affect the UK’s ability to operate its nuclear deterrent:

   In the particular circumstances of Trident bases in Scotland there is no way in which the UK Government could rapidly rebase these forces in England. [...] Arguably, it would be politically impossible for them to do so, so for Scotland in those circumstances to insist on them leaving would be to force the UK to make a decision effectively to de-nuclearise.

26. John Ainslie was asked what would happen to the nuclear weapons if his timetable was implemented, and he confirmed:

   You are forced into a position of disarming. You cannot move them to England or Wales. You cannot move them to the United States, because that was previously ruled out, and Ile Longue in France—what you are talking about in France is a new site.

Furthermore, he confirmed CND Scotland would campaign for the weapons to be removed from Scotland within two years knowing that the result could mean disarmament for the UK, and they would not wish to allow the UK extra time to develop a new base:
For Scottish CND to say, “Let us move them in 20 years’ time to England,” is not something we would have any time for at all. If what you are saying is that in 20 years’ time, we will build another facility at Falmouth, which is the more viable of the options, we could not say, “Oh, yes, we will go along with that.”\(^{47}\)

This view appeared to be shared by the First Minister in an interview after the SNP October 2012 Conference, where he was quoted as saying that if Scotland won independence then “far better it was curtains for Trident”, and that given the options the UK could decide on “a much better policy, which would be to decommission the weapons system.”\(^{48}\)

27. If the Scottish Government insisted upon the removal of the nuclear deterrent from Faslane by the ‘speediest safe transition’ then it would mean the armed submarine on patrol would be recalled, and in effect, Continuous At Sea Deterrent would stop. The UK at that point would no longer be able to operate its nuclear deterrent and it is not clear how quickly the UK could restore Continuous At Sea Deterrence.

\(^{47}\) Qq 1123-1124

\(^{48}\) “Independent Scotland would not house Trident missiles, says Alex Salmond”, *The Guardian*, 21 October 2012
4 Trident is removed from Scotland, what next?

Long term relocation

28. The preference for the UK would be for Trident and the necessary facilities to remain in Scotland, as Rt Hon Nick Harvey MP, then Minister for the Armed Forces, told us: “I would have thought that relocation would be just about the least favoured option that it would be possible to conjecture.” And as a result, he said:

The UK Government are not making plans for independence, as I explained, and hence we are not making plans to move the nuclear deterrent or indeed the submarines from HM Naval Base Clyde.

29. But, as we have seen, in the event of separation and a new Scottish Government insisting upon the ‘speediest safe transition’ of the nuclear fleet from the Clyde, then this could be done in less than twenty four months. If the UK wanted to maintain the nuclear deterrent, then the UK would have to identify and develop an alternative site, or sites, that replicated the assets of Faslane and Coulport. (Faslane and Coulport are two sites, eight miles apart, connected by a road.) We heard differing views as to how easy this would be.

Replacing Faslane

30. Faslane was chosen because it provided ready access to deep water and space to build a naval base that could be protected. There are other sites where submarines currently berth, or could be adapted to provide a home for the Vanguard submarines. Francis Tusa suggested Barrow, where BAE are currently building the Astute-class submarines, as it had support facilities, included a ship-lift, similar to Faslane. The main issues with Barrow is the shallow approach, that would restrict submarine access to convenient monthly tides without significant dredging, and the size of the dock which would not, at present, have room for more than two Vanguard-class submarines. Milford Haven does provide access to very deep water, and it would have more room than at Barrow for docking, but it was passed over in the 1960s and there are important economic and industrial facilities there today that would make it less suitable.

31. Devonport appeared to be the most popular, it had been the former base to the Trafalgar-class submarines and the Vanguard-class submarines regularly visit Devonport (unarmed) for maintenance, but as with the other possibilities, the main issues with
Devonport did not relate to recreating the facilities of Faslane, but of Coulport, and without Coulport, there is no deterrent.54

Replacing Coulport

32. Malcolm Chalmers, who had recently reviewed the original options for Polaris in the 1960s, concluded that given time and expense, Devonport might work for Faslane but:

You could not put the Coulport facility in Devonport because there simply is not the room given the safety margins, which would be higher now than they were in the 1960s.55

33. Coulport is not just a storage site, but also possesses the huge floating dock where the warheads are placed inside the missiles, three kilometres from Garelochhead on one side and Ardentinny on the other.56 Any new warhead storage facility would need to provide safety assurances on a similar scale in relation to loading and offloading warheads from the missiles in the submarines.57 To do so, such a site would preferably be near the submarine base and on the coast, as Professor Walker said:

In my view, the warhead storage is not the crucial issue; the crucial question is how you create a facility where you can marry the warhead and missile, load it on to the submarine and also remove it from the submarine, if you need to, and bring it back on shore. That is a very delicate and dangerous operation, so it is all to do with safety calculations. [...] You don’t want to do anything like this near built-up areas, tourist sites or whatever.58

34. Barrow and Devonport have a large population too close to satisfy the safety margins required, and Milford Haven has a huge Liquid Natural Gas facility nearby. Falmouth, relatively close to Devonport, had been considered as a possible Coulport in the 1960s, but was ruled out because it would impact upon an area with a strong tourist economy and involve the loss of two villages and moving a significant population.59 Portland, which was considered in the 1960s, was judged to not have a suitable site for the warheads depot closer than a Ministry of Defence tank range 15 kilometres inland.60 Professor Chalmers said this criteria of keeping warheads and missiles far enough away from people and sites of economic value was why Scottish locations were popular among the 1960s options:

A lot of the issues at that time, which would be greatly intensified today, would be in relation to the safety margins that the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate would insist on. Unless you are prepared to re-house a very large number of civilians and close

54 “Nuclear subs will stay in Scotland, Royal Navy chiefs decide“, Daily Telegraph, 26 January 2012
55 Q 263
56 Q 1118
57 Q 266
58 Q 1368
59 Q 263
60 CND Scotland, Trident: Nowhere to Go, January 2012
down areas of housing and so on, it limits where you can put the particular facilities.61

35. Some, such as John Ainslie, of CND Scotland, said it would not be possible to find a new site,62 although he accepted that there may be sites additional to those considered in the 1960s.63 Others, such as Francis Tusa, editor of Defence Analysis, believed that the problems of relocation had been exaggerated. He pointed out that Coulport had been designed to accommodate between 500 to 600 warheads, whereas any new facility would only need to store around 200 and could be considerably smaller. He suggested moving the warheads to a modernised AWE Burghfield or AWE Aldermaston, which both already had full nuclear licences.64 Malcolm Chalmers said Aldermaston was not relevant because it was not on the coast,65 and Mr Tusa conceded that it was not ideal to have the warheads in the middle of Berkshire and the submarines based in Devonport but “it does not mean you cannot do it.” He agreed this would not happen quickly but: “there are more than enough nuclear facilities all round the remaining parts of the UK” and it was “just an article of faith that you can never move any of the boats anywhere; none of the facilities could be replicated anywhere else, and it would all take far too long.”66

**The cost of relocation**

36. We found it difficult to establish what it would cost to replicate Faslane and Coulport elsewhere. Most witnesses, such as Professor Walker, thought the cost would be huge:

> Don’t ask me to put a figure on it; I have no idea at all, but certainly it would be billions of pounds.67

37. In contrast, Francis Tusa thought that finding a new home would not be too expensive:

> the number of options for moving the deterrent out of Scotland is huge, and a lot of them are not that expensive either. I have seen reports that it would cost £50 billion to move. No, it would not; it really wouldn’t.”68

38. When we asked the Ministry of Defence if they knew how much it would cost, Nick Harvey MP, then Minister for Armed Forces, said: “It would be a very challenging project, which would take a very long time to complete and would cost a gargantuan sum of money.”69 He told us that a recent upgrade of the facilities at Faslane had cost £3.5 billion

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61 Q 262
63 Q 1128; Qq 1175-1183
64 CND Scotland, *Disarming Scotland*, June 2012. CND believed that the Special Ammunition Site at RAF Honington, Suffolk, home to the Ministry of Defence’s Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear warfare unit, could be used also.
65 Q 262
66 Q 256
67 Q 1360
68 Q 196
69 Q 326
and “If we were to replicate it somewhere else, that figure would be dwarfed by whatever that would cost”\textsuperscript{70}

39. Nick Harvey MP emphasised that the price of forcing the nuclear deterrent out of Scotland would not be seen in isolation:

In the context of that pan-governmental negotiation to which I alluded earlier, which I would expect the Treasury to take an active interest in, if a future independent Scottish Government were to insist upon the nuclear deterrent being relocated out of Faslane, the impact of that on that pan-governmental discussion would be very substantial indeed. It is hard to think of any single item that would be larger in that negotiation.\textsuperscript{71}

And the price would not be borne by just the residual United Kingdom:

if that cost had to be met in a way which, in a practical sense, would seem to me and I would have thought seemed to people of good sense to be completely unnecessary, then there would be an implication of that across the rest of the negotiation. It would be the largest item looming across the whole piece. [...] If the residual UK taxpayer had to pick up that bill, their ability to pick up any other bills would be proportionately diminished.\textsuperscript{72}

\textit{The time taken to relocate}

40. Similarly, it was difficult to find a consensus on how long it would take to build a new version of Faslane and Coulport. It took three and a half to four years to build Coulport,\textsuperscript{73} but most of our witnesses thought the process of building a new version would take much longer, not least because the political issues around any new site would lead to unpredictable delays. As Professor Walker pointed out:

None of these facilities had to go through any kind of planning system. The public feels it has a right to express an opinion on these matters, and I can imagine it being very controversial [...] The Government would have to go through various quite difficult political processes to try to get consent for this.\textsuperscript{74}

Professor Malcolm Chalmers agreed:

For people at Falmouth at the moment, having a nuclear weapons facility in their back yard is not right at the top of their agenda, and it would be in this scenario. I think it would take a very long time to work through. It is very uncertain where it would all end.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{70} Q 326
\textsuperscript{71} Q 327
\textsuperscript{72} Qq 334-336
\textsuperscript{73} Q 256
\textsuperscript{74} Q 1358
\textsuperscript{75} Q 265
41. As a result, Professor Walker thought it might take twenty years or longer:

Yes, but 20 years might be a minimum; it might be longer than that. You would have to sustain your political will and funding for a very long time. I don’t know whether the political parties could agree upon that and exactly what the ramifications would be. The process of finding a site might take five to 10 years, and then being sure you have one, and all the engineering and construction works, mean it could be a long time.\(^\text{76}\)

42. Dr O’Brien thought it might be completed in fewer than twenty years, possibly 10 or 15, but only with an enormous amount of resources, no objections and cross-party support, and even then he thought it unlikely.\(^\text{77}\)

43. Peter Luff MP, then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence, said that while he could not say how long it would take to relocate Faslane and Coulport, he described some of the construction complexities at the present site:

Nevertheless, one has to recognise that one is moving nuclear-qualified facilities and the standard of safety required is absolutely enormous. Even quite simple engineering tasks for a conventional boat/ship become immensely more complicated when dealing with nuclear facilities. I am going to Faslane to see the new jetties being constructed. It is a saga in itself. One jetty has been a huge struggle. There are massive problems with the contractor meeting the very testing requirements of a nuclear-qualified facility. It is not just a question of shoving up a few buildings. It is a question of creating an immensely strong infrastructure against any seismic shock, for example, that you can possibly foresee. The orders of magnitude for the construction complexity are significantly greater than any other more routine defence investment. Therefore, I have no reason to challenge the figure you are giving but I cannot justify it either. They are much longer periods of time than are normal for construction projects.\(^\text{78}\)

44. He agreed that there would have to be a period of consultation for any new site, and that: “It would be a very long project indeed. It could not happen in a couple of years.”\(^\text{79}\) In view of this, we asked the Government if they had held discussions with the Scottish Government about whether Trident would have to be removed from the Clyde immediately. Nick Harvey and Peter Luff agreed the Ministry of Defence had not been approached or had discussions with the Scottish Government about defence matters in the event of Scotland becoming a separate country, and Mr Harvey added:

I find it quite impossible to make an assessment of their intentions. One can piece together different statements that have been made at different times. One understands that the policy position of the SNP has historically been that they are

\(^{76}\) Q 1370
\(^{77}\) Qq 1372-1373
\(^{78}\) Q 345
\(^{79}\) Q 346
completely opposed to the nuclear deterrent, but I do not know what their precise proposition will be when making the case for independence.\textsuperscript{80}

45. Identifying and recreating a suitable base to replace Faslane and Coulport would be highly problematic, very expensive, and fraught with political difficulties. In particular, it would be difficult to find a site that satisfied the requirements for the co-location of the submarine base, the warheads depot and the facility to marry the warheads and missiles on to submarines that adhered to the safety requirements.

46. We were told that the Ministry of Defence was not making contingency plans for the event of Scotland becoming a separate country. Estimates suggest it could take up to twenty years or longer to develop a long-term replacement for Coulport. It is possible that the clock on relocating Trident would not start until after the result of the referendum is known.

47. The Minister for the Armed Forces has said that if a newly separate Scotland insisted upon the removal of Trident out of Faslane, and the UK was forced into developing a new base at great expense, then the associated costs would be included in the separation negotiations.

Alternatives outside England and Wales

Sharing facilities with US or France

48. It has also been suggested that the warheads might be stored and loaded onto the submarines at a base outside the British Isles, if only as a temporary measure. Two options had been suggested: the French facilities in Brittany or the US facilities in Georgia.\textsuperscript{81} Indeed, Alex Salmond MSP, has said that following separation, the UK would have two choices: relocate to another part of the UK or use bases in America or France.\textsuperscript{82} Francis Tusa thought the US or France options could work:

Is there any reason why we should not be able to store warheads in French facilities off Brest? We shared American storage facilities for nuclear warheads at Iserlohn for 40 years and no one seemed to care. [...] There were American, German and British guards. The UK had British bunkers on German soil, but it was a US sovereign base. I did not notice anyone caring one way or the other.\textsuperscript{83}

49. Professor Malcolm Chalmers told us he did not think using the US was an option because it would raise questions about how independent the UK’s deterrent was:

\textsuperscript{80} Q 316
\textsuperscript{81} Q 196
\textsuperscript{82} “Nuclear weapons ‘outlawed’ in an independent Scotland, says Salmond”, \textit{BBC Scotland}, 21 October 2012 www.bbc.co.uk
\textsuperscript{83} Qq 195-196
The option of having the Coulport facility in the United States was looked at when Trident was first purchased. I think part of the reason it was rejected was that it was seen as just a step too far to being perceived as not having an independent deterrent if both your missile servicing and warheads were based in the United States. It would have saved money. There was also an issue at that time, which was not fully explored, as to whether the United States would be prepared to have a foreign nuclear weapons base on its territory or whether it would ask, “If you are not even prepared to have your nuclear servicing done in your own country, how serious are you about having an independent deterrent?”

He also considered the French option unlikely:

I think that in the case of France it would be a different dynamic. There may be a stronger French stake in Britain remaining a nuclear weapons state than there is an American stake in that, but, even then, it would not be automatic that the French would be prepared to have a sovereign foreign nuclear weapons base on their territory. They would think twice about it. It is possible; I think it is an option, but I think it would be a difficult one.

50. John Ainslie said that the UK submarine fleet probably could not be accommodated in France; the current base at Ile-Longue would be too small to accommodate the additional UK submarines so would require building a new base, which would take time, and be exacerbated by all the political problems that would flow from a foreign power building a new base on French soil. Indeed, Peter Luff MP admitted that while the UK does collaborate with the French on nuclear and security issues: “The idea of dumping off the boats there for a few years while we sort out a long-term solution would be a little tricky to manage.”

Maintaining a UK base in a separate Scotland

51. An agreement between the UK and Scottish Governments to keep Faslane and Coulport as a UK base within a separate Scotland would save the costs and inconvenience of relocation. Dr O’Brien thought the issue was not whether a deal could be negotiated but whether any agreement could be managed on a day-to-day basis:

You can cut a deal that, yes, you can use the base, but that opens up a huge number of other questions: how long, how you protect it, and what if there are protestors. To my mind, it is a little more involved than just saying, “You pay; you use.”

52. The agreement would need to address how UK submarines might pass through Scottish waters, how the current convoys to AWE Burghfield would continue across Scotland, and how it would manage the geographical fact that Faslane and Coulport are eight miles apart, and including the connecting road in a UK sovereign base would cut

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84 Q 267
85 Q 267
86 Q 1121. See also Trident: Nowhere to Go, January 2012
87 Q 348
88 Q 1397
Garelochhead and the Rosneath peninsula off from the rest of Scotland. William Walker explained some of the problems relating to ensuring access to the sea:

Under the Law of the Sea, territorial waters extend for 12 miles. Essentially, that means 24 miles, which takes you south of Arran. Am I right in remembering that, under article 20 of the Law of the Sea, any foreign submarines have to fly a flag and be on the surface when travelling through territorial waters? There is an issue there. Would the Scottish Government be at all times informed of the movement of submarines up and down these channels? I imagine there would have to be a separate treaty between the two as to exactly how these waterways will be managed. There is also sonar equipment and many other things to do with this, which I imagine are very sensitive matters for the UK Government, but all of this would have to be part of a treaty between the two as to exactly how these waterways were managed.

He thought this would provide problems for both governments, not least how to police the area if anti-nuclear protests continued:

I have always felt that, if the UK Government look at a situation of having their strategic nuclear force in this particular place in a foreign country, they will feel extremely uncomfortable and will wonder how to manage it, what the international implications are, and how to react to exactly what you are suggesting—the idea that you might have public protests happening there and so on. You might have an accident in the Clyde. How exactly do they respond to this? I think they would feel very uncomfortable.

John Ainslie, CND Scotland, did not think a sovereign base was tenable:

If the force is based in Scotland, and if we are looking at the scenario of an independent Scotland, which is a separate, sovereign state, the idea of a sovereign state having its whole nuclear weapons capability indefinitely in another sovereign state is probably not sustainable.

Neither did Professor Walker think a sovereign base, secured by a treaty, was likely. He said the idea of a sovereign base was an outdated concept, and thought it more likely that the land remained Scottish sovereign territory with a long lease to the UK, managed by a formalised gentlemen’s agreement between the two countries. If this was the case, then Dr O’Brien said the nature of any agreement depended on the NATO question:

If Scotland were a NATO ally, you might be able to work up an agreement, but so much of this hinges on the NATO question. If Scotland remained in NATO, you could perhaps limit it and give Scotland, as a NATO ally, certain defensive
responsibilities without it. A non-NATO Scotland would mean they [the UK] would want a fully protected area.95

55. The Americans previously had a submarine base on the Holy Loch, and at the time the UK had provided secure access to the sea. This was workable because the agreement between the US and the UK was made within a formal alliance. With that in mind, Dr O’Brien said:

Personally, I don’t see how a nuclear power can, in the long term, base its weapons in another country, particularly if it is done by gentleman’s agreement that could be changed because of domestic political changes in that country. Scotland could go down another route. I could see that as being the best short-term—even medium-term—solution, but not in the long term.96

56. The UK’s preferred option is for nothing to change. Failing that, the next best option would be securing an agreement that enabled the submarines to operate out of Faslane until an alternative base was found elsewhere. Doing so, without the status of a sovereign base, appears to be at odds with what Nick Harvey MP told us, that if the UK Government could negotiate for the base to remain in some form, then it would consider it “critical” to have “complete freedom of action—complete control and complete sovereignty over the facility.”97 And, while not speculating on contingency plans that the MoD were not making, he said: “the critical point of principle would have to be complete control over what we did there.”98 Would a newly separate Scottish Government be willing to facilitate and guarantee this? Allowing the base to remain would seem unlikely, as Alex Salmond told the BBC that while it was for the UK Government to decide what to do with Trident once it was removed from Scotland:

That doesn’t mean we think it reasonable to lease out part of Scottish territory to what you describe as a Cyprus situation. If Scotland, by majority, doesn’t want nuclear weapons, the SNP proposition is to write that into the constitution of the state. So that would make the possession of nuclear weapons illegal.”99

A phased relocation

57. The advantage of the UK having continued use of Faslane and Coulport would mean Vanguard-class submarines could continue to operate out of the Clyde while the MoD identified and developed an alternative base for the Successor submarines.100 Professor Walker suggested this might enable CASD to continue:

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95 Q 1378
96 Q 1391
97 Q 331
98 Q 332
100 Q 1406
If it is a question of the replacement submarines going somewhere else and you are building up a replacement fleet in other bases, you can manage the transition so that you phase out an old submarine and bring in a new one, although it is located elsewhere. I can imagine it working. If you are doing it rather suddenly and rapidly, it is hard to imagine. There would be periods in which there was no deterrent operating in those circumstances but, again, it is a matter of how it is phased and managed. You could imagine it working; in other scenarios it wouldn’t work.\textsuperscript{101}

58. Even such an agreement could be reached on a phased transition, this would necessitate the Scottish Government agreeing to a timetable that could mean nuclear weapons remaining at Faslane for at least another twenty years. Malcolm Chalmers said that this could work in Scotland’s favour in the separation negotiations:

If a Scottish Government were to accept that for a significant period of time, perhaps indefinitely but certainly a long period of time, Trident would have to remain because there simply is not anywhere else to put it, that in itself would be a significant bargaining card for Scotland. Scotland could say, “We’ve given you this, but in return we want a reasonable negotiation that leaves Scotland with a defence force that is small but does the job, and a Scotland in NATO that therefore does not have to rely entirely on itself for its own security.”\textsuperscript{102}

This last point is important. The SNP have said that they would like to co-operate with the UK on some military matters. The UK is highly unlikely to co-operate if Scotland is not willing to co-operate on Trident.

59. If there was co-operation, then the UK might avoid temporary loss of CASD, but it would not avoid the costs of relocation. It would still require the UK to build a new base, it would still cost a large amount of money, and it would mean nuclear submarines carrying armed Trident missiles operating out of Scotland for possibly another twenty years. There would be a transition period where the UK would be operating two bases simultaneously: one for Vanguard in Scotland, possibly until 2028, and one for Successor in England or Wales. The running costs for operating Faslane and Coulport alone are an estimated £2 billion a year,\textsuperscript{103} and there is a risk that the combined cost of replacing Trident and developing a new base may be incompatible with maintaining the deterrent in the future.\textsuperscript{104}

60. Any agreement whether to relocate the UK nuclear deterrent outside the British Isles, possibly in France or the USA, would be a decision for the UK in discussion with its allies. However, the evidence presented to us suggested this would be very difficult, both logistically and politically.

61. An arrangement to allow the UK to continue to operate Trident out of the Clyde in a separate Scotland could be negotiated in theory but it would be very difficult in practice. The Scottish Government would need to agree to the UK retaining complete freedom of action, either as a sovereign base in Scotland or some sort of lease

\textsuperscript{101} Q 1447  
\textsuperscript{102} Q 165  
\textsuperscript{103} Q 477  
\textsuperscript{104} Q 1348
arrangement. The agreement would have to assure the UK Government that the Scottish Government would cooperate sufficiently to ensure the base could operate on a day to day basis. A political deal or a gentlemen’s agreement would be vulnerable to a change of government and withdrawal of cooperation. Any agreement would have to be formalised.

62. An agreement allowing Trident to remain on the Clyde would enable the UK to continue to operate Continuous At Sea Deterrent. Such an agreement could be to allow Trident to remain indefinitely, or allow time for the UK to develop a new base elsewhere in England or Wales for the new Successor submarines.

63. A separate Scotland would be presented with a choice over Trident. It could honour the long held policy of the SNP that there should be no nuclear weapons in Scotland and insist the ‘speediest safe transition’ of Trident from Scotland, which can be done within twenty four months. In fact, Trident can be deactivated within a matter of days. The process requires the Vanguard submarines to come off patrol, the UK would lose the ability to operate its nuclear deterrent and inevitably create the prospect of unilateral nuclear disarmament being imposed upon the Royal Navy and UK Government, since the construction of facilities elsewhere could take upwards of 20 years.

64. Alternatively, a separate Scotland could, in cooperation with the UK, allow Trident to remain on the Clyde long enough for the UK to identify and develop a new base elsewhere. This would mean armed nuclear submarines operating out of Scotland for 20 years or longer. Developing a new base, particularly replicating the facilities at Coulport, could only be done at great expense, and the UK Government has made it clear that any such costs would be included in the separation negotiations. This would be alongside other items such as retaining the Bank of England as a lender of last resort and financial regulator for Scotland, or access to intelligence and the work of GCHQ.
Conclusions and recommendations

The speediest safe transition of nuclear weapons from Scotland

1. It is possible to deactivate Trident within a matter of days, and for the nuclear warheads, missiles and submarines to be removed from Scotland within twenty four months. (Paragraph 21)

2. Scotland could not carry out this process by itself as all handling and transport of the warheads must be carried out by specialist staff from the UK. It would require full co-operation between the UK and Scottish Governments. (Paragraph 22)

What would happen to the UK’s nuclear deterrent?

3. If the Scottish Government insisted upon the removal of the nuclear deterrent from Faslane by the ‘speediest safe transition’ then it would mean the armed submarine on patrol would be recalled, and in effect, Continuous At Sea Deterrent would stop. The UK at that point would no longer be able to operate its nuclear deterrent and it is not clear how quickly the UK could restore Continuous At Sea Deterrence. (Paragraph 27)

Relocating Trident

4. Identifying and recreating a suitable base to replace Faslane and Coulport would be highly problematic, very expensive, and fraught with political difficulties. In particular, it would be difficult to find a site that satisfied the requirements for the co-location of the submarine base, the warheads depot and the facility to marry the warheads and missiles on to submarines that adhered to the safety requirements. (Paragraph 45)

5. We were told that the Ministry of Defence was not making contingency plans for the event of Scotland becoming a separate country. Estimates suggest it could take up to twenty years or longer to develop a long-term replacement for Coulport. It is possible that the clock on relocating Trident would not start until after the result of the referendum is known. (Paragraph 46)

6. The Minister for the Armed Forces has said that if a newly separate Scotland insisted upon the removal of Trident out of Faslane, and the UK was forced into developing a new base at great expense, then the associated costs would be included in the separation negotiations. (Paragraph 47)

Alternatives outside England and Wales

7. Any agreement whether to relocate the UK nuclear deterrent outside the British Isles, possibly in France or the USA, would be a decision for the UK in discussion with its allies. However, the evidence presented to us suggested this would be very difficult, both logistically and politically. (Paragraph 60)
8. An arrangement to allow the UK to continue to operate Trident out of the Clyde in a separate Scotland could be negotiated in theory but it would be very difficult in practice. The Scottish Government would need to agree to the UK retaining complete freedom of action, either as a sovereign base in Scotland or some sort of lease arrangement. The agreement would have to assure the UK Government that the Scottish Government would cooperate sufficiently to ensure the base could operate on a day to day basis. A political deal or a gentlemen’s agreement would be vulnerable to a change of government and withdrawal of cooperation. Any agreement would have to be formalised. (Paragraph 61)

9. An agreement allowing Trident to remain on the Clyde would enable the UK to continue to operate Continuous At Sea Deterrent. Such an agreement could be to allow Trident to remain indefinitely, or allow time for the UK to develop a new base elsewhere in England or Wales for the new Successor submarines. (Paragraph 62)

Conclusion

10. A separate Scotland would be presented with a choice over Trident. It could honour the long held policy of the SNP that there should be no nuclear weapons in Scotland and insist the ‘speediest safe transition’ of Trident from Scotland, which can be done within twenty four months. In fact, Trident can be deactivated within a matter of days. The process requires the Vanguard submarines to come off patrol, the UK would lose the ability to operate its nuclear deterrent and inevitably create the prospect of unilateral nuclear disarmament being imposed upon the Royal Navy and UK Government, since the construction of facilities elsewhere could take upwards of 20 years. (Paragraph 63)

11. Alternatively, a separate Scotland could, in cooperation with the UK, allow Trident to remain on the Clyde long enough for the UK to identify and develop a new base elsewhere. This would mean armed nuclear submarines operating out of Scotland for 20 years or longer. Developing a new base, particularly replicating the facilities at Coulport, could only be done at great expense, and the UK Government has made it clear that any such costs would be included in the separation negotiations. This would be alongside other items such as retaining the Bank of England as a lender of last resort and financial regulator for Scotland, or access to intelligence and the work of GCHQ. (Paragraph 64)
Submarines Base Ported in Clyde 2012-2024

Notes:

1. The illustration shown is based on planning assumptions as at September 2012 and may be subject to change in line with the classified submarine programme.

2. Not all base ported submarines will receive engineering support at Her Majesty’s Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde. Submarines will undergo upkeep and displaced maintenance periods at HMNB Devonport.
Formal Minutes

Tuesday 23 October 2012

Members present:

Ian Davidson, in the Chair
Simon Reevell
Mr Alan Reid
Lindsay Roy

Draft Report (The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Terminating Trident—Days or Decades?), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 64 read and agreed to.

Annex and Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 30 October at 2.00 pm]
Witnesses

Printed as HC 139-I

Wednesday 23 May 2012

Professor Hew Strachan, Chichele Professor of the History of War, All Souls College, University of Oxford, Professor Malcolm Chalmers, Research Director, UK Defence Policy, Royal United Services Institute, and Francis Tusa, Editor, Defence Analysis

Ev 19

Wednesday 13 June 2012

Nick Harvey MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces and Peter Luff MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Equipment, Support and Technology)

Ev 47

Wednesday 20 June 2012

Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Crawford, former Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Tank Regiment and Richard Marsh, Economist, 4-consulting

Ev 65

Unprinted, available on the website

Monday 16 July 2012

John Ainslie, Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Wednesday 12 September 2012

Professor William Walker, School of International Relations, University of St Andrews, and Dr Philips O'Brien, Scottish Centre for War Studies, University of Glasgow
List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government’s response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

**Session 2010–12**

- **First Report**
  - Postal Services in Scotland
  - HC 669 (HC 884)

- **Second Report**
  - Video Games Industry in Scotland
  - HC 500 (Cm 8067)

- **Third Report**
  - UK Border Agency and Glasgow City Council
  - HC 733

- **Fourth Report**
  - The Scotland Bill
  - HC 775

- **Fifth Report**
  - Student Immigration System in Scotland
  - HC 912 (Cm 8192)

- **Sixth Report**
  - The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Unanswered Questions
  - HC 1806

- **Seventh Report**
  - The Crown Estate in Scotland
  - HC 1117

- **Eighth Report**
  - The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Do you agree this is a biased question?

**Session 2012–13**

- **First Report**
  - A Robust Grid for 21st Century Scotland
  - HC 499

- **Second Report**
  - The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: making the process legal
  - HC 542

- **Third Report**
  - The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: a multi-option question?
  - HC 543