



Beyond the War Economy

A Sustainable Proposal for Wales



Summary briefing



CND CYMRU

What future do we want for Wales?

Wales stands at a political and economic crossroads.

Across the UK, **defence spending is rising sharply**, framed as necessary for a permanent “war footing” in an increasingly unstable world.

Military investment is expanding; procurement budgets are growing; universities and industries are being aligned with UK Government security priorities. **Wales is embedded within this shift.**

From advanced weapons manufacturing in the south to military training estates across rural communities, defence-linked research partnerships in universities to recruitment pipelines in schools: **Wales is increasingly tied to a war economy.**

Public money, land, research capacity and skilled labour are being **channelled into military purposes**, often justified in the language of “security”, “jobs” and “regional growth.”

What is Security?

Is it building our defences in a militaristic way - putting the UK on a war footing? Security through fear of others?

Investing in ever more sophisticated weapons to ‘protect’ state security

OR IS IT

**Communities having adequate income, food and clean water, housing, health care, ecological stability, equality of opportunities?
Free from fear and abuse**

Challenges We Face to a Secure, Sustainable Wales

Wales faces a range of non-military risks that directly affect the safety and wellbeing of its population:

- Climate change and extreme weather
- Energy insecurity
- Public health crises
- Economic inequality
- Infrastructure vulnerability
- Demographic pressures in rural communities

Does investment in the defence industries address these challenges?

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The environmental impact of military activity is often ignored and not recorded. Defence manufacturing involves huge carbon emissions and hazardous materials, resulting in contamination of land, air and water.

The military and their activities globally produce over 6% of greenhouse gas emissions, and the military industry in Wales will contribute to this.

JOBS and SKILLS

Defence-linked employment is repeatedly presented as indispensable. Yet reliance on a small number of high-risk defence contracts exposes Welsh communities to volatility, political decisions made in Westminster and ethical controversies surrounding arms exports. The Ajax programme developing armoured vehicles in Merthyr Tydfil demonstrates the fragility of this model: billions of pounds committed, years of delay, unresolved technical problems and workers left dependent on decisions beyond their control; and inevitable loss of jobs. History has shown that communities reliant on single industries, such as steel and coal, for their employment are vulnerable to closures and almost total unemployment. Diversity of jobs is needed for a secure, resilient future.

Militarism in Wales is not only about weapons production. It is about structural economic dependence on defence contracts, political prioritisation of military industries and the normalisation of armed forces presence in civic life.

It is about a model of development that assumes security comes from weapons systems rather than from resilient communities, thriving public services and environmental stability.

All the skills currently in defence manufacturing and contracts (precision engineering, systems integration, advanced materials, digital design) are transferable. With strategic planning, public investment and worker involvement, these capabilities could power civilian industries that enhance human security rather than military capacity.

At the same time, the opportunity cost is stark. Evidence consistently shows that public investment in healthcare, education, renewable energy, housing retrofit and social care creates more jobs per pound spent than military procurement. A strategy that prioritises weapons over wellbeing is a direct political choice and not one that benefits the people of Wales.

Comparative Spend and Jobs Social Economy vs Military Economy

Social Care and Enterprise sector generates significantly more jobs per £ spent than the defence industry in Wales



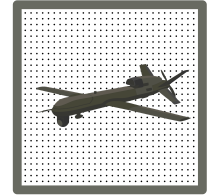
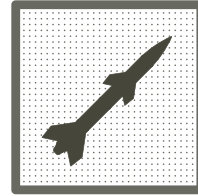
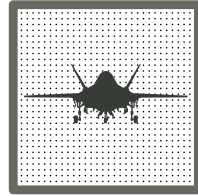
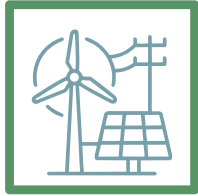
Adult Social Care sector

For every £1.00 spent in the adult care sector £2.78 worth of social economic benefit is generated.

£2.1 billion expenditure/turnover = 74,000 jobs representing 35.7 jobs per £1 million.

Social and Enterprise Sector

1 job for every £83,000 to £100,000 turnover of revenue.



Defence Industry

Military spending has one of the weakest multiplier effects in the economy, creating fewer jobs per pound than investment in care, education, housing or clean energy.

£1.1 billion expenditure/turnover = 3,900 jobs representing 3.5 jobs per £1 million.

1 job for every £280,000 direct MOD spending.

Defence spend on the Ajax Armoured Vehicle project

By 2022 the UK government had already spent £3.2 billion on the project, without any operational capability to the British Army. This remains the case today.

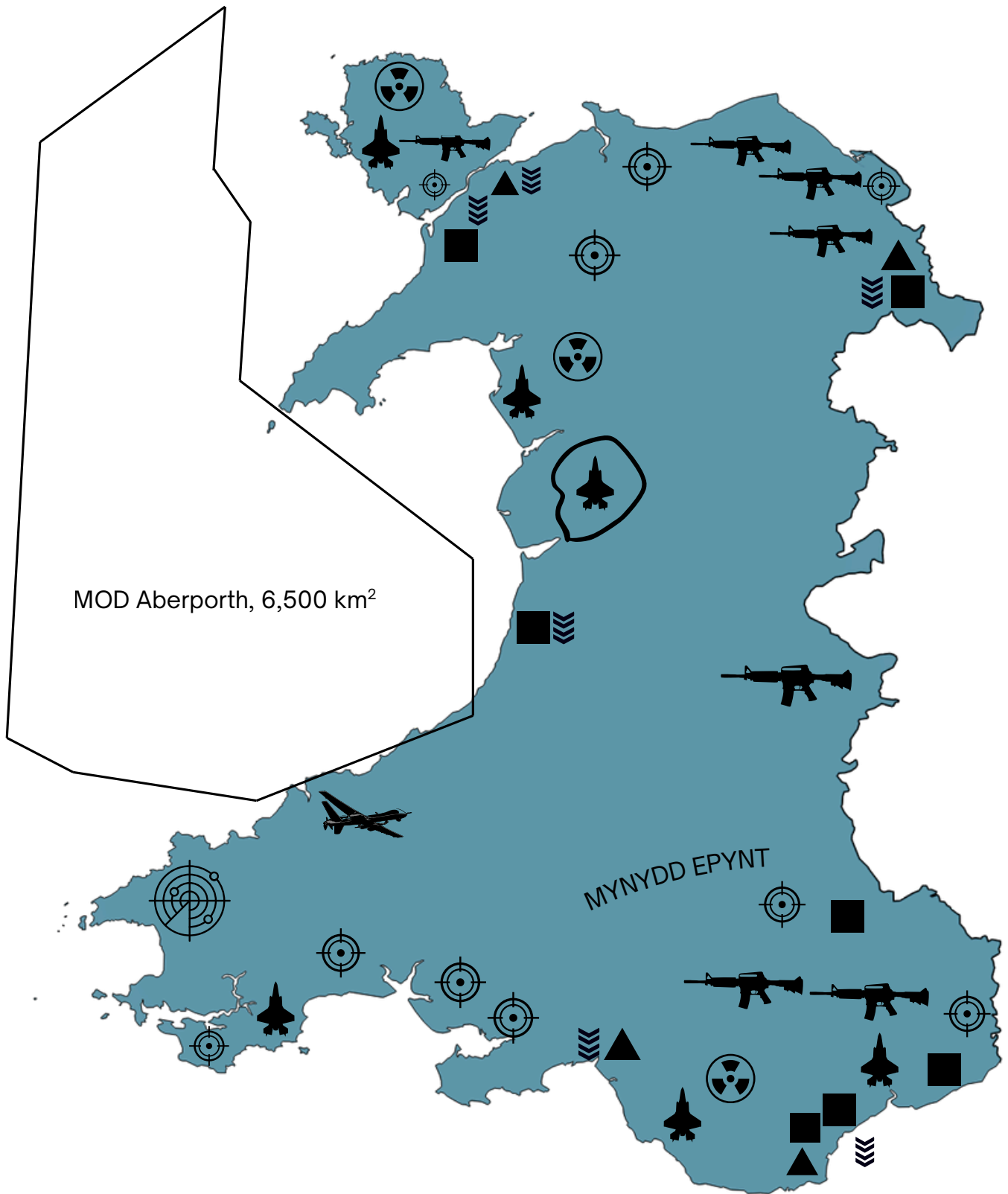
Public investment on this scale could have financed 16,000 social houses, which are desperately needed. History has shown that communities reliant on single industries, such as steel and coal, for their employment are vulnerable to closures and almost total unemployment. Diversity of jobs is needed for a secure, resilient future.

What could the Defence budget be spent on instead?

A peaceful Welsh economy could prioritise:

- Renewable energy generation and grid infrastructure
- Large-scale home insulation and retrofit
- Public transport expansion
- Suitable agriculture and food resilience
- Environmental restoration and climate adaptation
- Well paid care work and social infrastructure
- Creative industries and digital innovation

These sectors are labour-intensive, regionally rooted and aligned with Wales's statutory commitment to sustainable development under the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. They generate social value and not weapons stockpiles.



- ▲ Recruitment office
- Barracks / Reserve Centre
- ⊙ Training area / weapons range
- ✈ RAF bases and airfields
- ≡ University armed service units / military preparation college
- 🔫 Arms manufacture
- ✈ Weapons testing
- ⊙ Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability (DARC)
- ☢ Nuclear site

Mapped locations of [known] military presence in Wales including presence in the Irish Sea and Cardigan Bay. Courtesy of Heddwch ar Waith who retain all copyright to this data (2026).



Wales contributes 8% of the UK military budget, far more than what is spent on fighting climate change.



74% of Welsh comprehensive schools are visited by the military an average of 4 times a year.



85% of land in Wales is designated as low flying area. Low flying maneuvers cause huge levels of noise pollution.



The nuclear weapons program depends on a civilian nuclear industry. The civilian nuclear industry is likely to return to Wales.



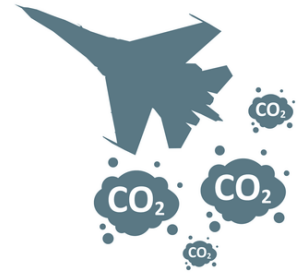
The Ministry of Defence owns 23,400 hectares of land in Wales, comprising around 25 military bases.



Elbit Systems are testing their drones across a 'Danger Area' of around 6,500 square kilometres of Cardigan Bay.



Pembrokeshire has been identified as the site for Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability (DARC).



Militarism is excluded from emissions targets, despite contributing 6% of total emissions – even higher than civil aviation, and the equivalent of 6 million UK cars

An example of what Militarism means

Military infrastructure such, as DARC currently proposed in Pembrokeshire, makes Wales a military target during any future conflict.

This does not make Wales safe, it puts the country on the front line

HAVE WE A CHOICE

The Senedd significant economic levers: procurement policy, infrastructure investment, skills funding, regional development strategy and influence over pension funds, public institutions and education and culture. These powers can be aligned with a **wellbeing economy** as opposed to a **war economy**.

Historical precedents such as worker-led industrial conversion proposals such as **the Lucas Plan** which transferred skills and resources to socially beneficial products, such as the road/rail bus, heat source pumps, health saving equipment to large-scale public investment programmes, demonstrate that **transformation is possible if governments choose it.**

We have the skills, we can focus our education and investments into **a sustainable economy, rooted in local priorities for a resilient and creative future.**

We call on all Senedd candidates to support:

- A Just Transition Strategy away from a military economy to one building a sustainable and resilient economy for Wales, including workforce guarantees, retraining pathways and regional investment plans.
- A full public audit of defence dependence in Wales, including employment, subsidies, research funding and land use.
- Prioritising public investment in renewable energy, health and social care, sustainable transport, retrofit housing and new passive housing. All job-rich alternatives to defence-led growth.
- An end to active promotion of military recruitment in schools and the increasing reliance on military funding for universities and other institutions.
- Alignment of economic development policy with the Well-being of Future Generations Act, ensuring security is defined in terms of social, environmental and community resilience.
- Transparency around public funds and pension investments linked to arms production.

The central question is not whether Wales can afford to diversify away from militarism.

It is whether Wales can afford not to.

Wales is rich; we have the skills, we have the resources, we have the vision.
We have The Well-Being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Let's enact it.

