

# [Peter Dowd response to Public Accounts Committee report into Concentrix](#)

**Peter**

**Dowd MP, Labour's Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury**, commenting on the Public Accounts Committee report into Concentrix, said:

"The findings by the Public Accounts Committee reaffirms the Government's continued inability to take responsibility for the shambolic decision to contract out tax credits to Concentrix. It is now crystal clear that Concentrix should never have been awarded the contact.

"This damning report reveals what many of us have long suspected, first that neither HMRC nor Concentrix bothered to check for error or fraud before suspending tax credits to some of the most vulnerable in our society.

"  
Secondly, that Concentrix's claims of mass savings were inflated from the start; they have barely recouped one fifth of their initial savings figure. Third, that HMRC is woefully ill-equipped to outsource such important decisions to the private sector, instead of penalising Concentrix for mistakes HMRC tripled its commission.

"This whole saga makes a mockery of the current tendering process. Given these damning findings, Concentrix should be banned from any future Government contracts and the Government should seek to recoup the majority of its commission."

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## [News story: Defence Secretary boosts Welsh jobs on visit to Aston Martin](#)

## and GDUK

The Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, today announced a £330 million contract to design the next-generation of battlefield communications on a visit to Wales. Sir Michael also formally handed over the St Athan 'Super Hangar' to Aston Martin.

Both the Morpheus battlefield communications contract with General Dynamics UK (GDUK), and Aston Martin's investment in St Athan will create and support a thousand jobs across south Wales.

Visiting the General Dynamics UK (GDUK) site at Oakdale, the Defence Secretary spoke of the MOD's new Morpheus programme, a £330 million investment in innovative new tactical communications systems for our Armed Forces, which will support 250 high-tech jobs in South Wales.

While in Wales, the Defence Secretary handed over the former MOD Super Hangar to Aston Martin at a special ceremony at St Athan. The redevelopment of the site into a state of the art manufacturing facility for the British luxury carmaker will directly create 750 new jobs in South Wales, and support thousands more as production starts in 2019.



Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon speaking at St Athan to handover the former RAF site to Aston Martin. Crown Copyright.

## **Speaking at General Dynamics UK's Oakdale site in South Wales, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:**

This £330 million contract for the next generation of battlefield communications, supporting 250 high skilled jobs, underlines the importance of Wales to our Armed Forces.

Backed by a rising defence budget, last year MOD spent £870 million with Welsh businesses helping to build a stronger economy and keep Britain safe.

As well as investing in new equipment we are also investing in a Better Defence Estate for our Armed Forces. Aston Martin's decision to build a new facility on land we no longer need will bring more high skilled jobs to Wales.

This state of the art communications system will be integrated on to the Army's new Ajax vehicles, currently under construction by GDUK, and allow British troops to rapidly deploy new radios and applications to connect with commanders and allies. The system will also be used by the RAF and Royal Navy on a range of platforms, and provide our personnel with modernised command and control networks they need to keep Britain safe.

## **Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns said:**

Wales is quickly establishing a strong reputation as an important hub of high skilled manufacturing. General Dynamics UK has long been instrumental in putting Wales on the front line when it comes to supporting our country's defence and security needs.

And thanks to the close partnerships between the UK Government and the prestigious Aston Martin brand, the St Athan site is springing back to life as a significant centre of employment, bringing with it valuable skills and a lasting legacy for the entire region.

Today's announcements are testament to this Government's determination to strengthen every part of the United Kingdom, and are a strong indicator that Wales is open for business, open for trade, and open for investment.

The MOD is investing £3.5 billion in Ajax, which will be in service with the Army from 2020. With new innovative equipment like Ajax and Morpheus, and new ways of working the Army of the future will be able to successfully tackle a wider range of threats and keep the UK safe.

## **Army Chief Information Officer, Major General Richard Semple,**

**said:**

Becoming the owner of architecture for MOD's tactical command and control systems is critical to getting up-to-date, ever evolving, battle-winning technology into the hands of our soldiers, sailors and airmen on operations; this is a critical component of digital transformation in the Army and Land Environment.

The Defence Secretary also met with some of GDUK's apprentices, who play an important role in the Defence Industry. The MOD is the largest provider of apprentices in the UK, enrolling 14,200 new apprentices across the Armed Services and in the civil service over the last year, and is committed to encouraging defence suppliers to support apprenticeships across their business.

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## [The Government needs to provide answers on how it will keep the UK as an attractive university destination for EU students – Blomfield](#)

**Paul Blomfield MP,**  
**Labour's Shadow Minister for Exiting the European Union,** commenting on the 6 percent fall in applications from non-UK European Union students, said:

"These latest UCAS figures show yet another drop in applications from non-UK EU students to our universities.

"The Government's failure to provide certainty to non-UK European citizens living, working and studying here is harming our world-class universities.

"The Government urgently needs to provide answers on how it will keep the UK as an attractive university destination for EU students, as we leave the EU.

"Thousands of jobs depend on it, as well as the diversity of our campuses and cities.

"One of Labour's six

tests for the final Brexit deal is a strong and collaborative future relationship with the EU. Strengthening our education exports is a vital part of this.”

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## [Funding to tackle Scotland’s alcohol](#)

# and drug crisis slashed

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- Funding to tackle Scotland's alcohol and drug crisis slashed

6 Apr 2017



Crucial funding to tackle Scotland's drugs and drink crisis has been cut across Scotland, new figures have revealed today.

In half of all Scotland's 14 Health Board areas, support for Alcohol and Drug Partnerships has fallen this year, the statistics show.

It contradicts a promise by Health Secretary Shona Robison to ensure that treatment would be maintained at "existing levels" across Scotland.

The cuts follow changes to the way drug and alcohol partnerships are funded.

Ministers have reduced their own funding but said earlier this year that Health Boards would top it up to ensure cash was maintained.

However, a Freedom of Information request by the Scottish Conservatives has shown that, in several health board areas in Scotland, this has not happened.

The biggest cut is in Lanarkshire. Spending from central government and the NHS board amounts to a cut of £700,000 on 2015-16. Funding has also gone down in Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Grampian, Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles.

This is despite the fact Ms Robison said in January that she would be "maintaining alcohol and drugs treatment performance at existing levels across ADP locales."□

## **Scottish Conservative lifestyle spokesman Brian Whittle said:**

"When she announced this changes, Shona Robsion could not have been clearer – overall spending on alcohol and substance misuse would be maintained at existing levels across Scotland.

"It has taken our own research to show this is simply not the case. A fall of nearly three quarters of a million pounds in some areas can only mean that support for drug and drink addiction is being cut.

"Cutting funding on alcohol and drug support is a false economy – because people with addictions often cost far more to the justice system and the NHS, not to mention to themselves, if they do not get treatment earlier on.

"Once again, we see SNP pledges falling apart at the seams.

"The Scottish Government must now urgently review the funding of this vital projects to assess whether people who need support are not getting it because of these cuts."

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**Please see a copy of Shona Robison's letter on ADP funding, dated January 16<sup>th</sup>.**

In it, Robison wrote:

"From the increased board baseline budgets we would expect a total of £15 million to also go towards supporting these efforts and maintain the overall spending on addressing alcohol and substance misuse, maintaining alcohol and drugs treatment performance at existing levels across ADP locales."

**Document including full figures of ADP funding:**

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/adp-funding/>

Spending cuts are as follows:

**NHS Lanarkshire:** -£693,740

**NHS Grampian:** -£243,922

**NHS Dumfries and Galloway:** -£233,834

**NHS Western Isles:** -£130,510

**NHS Fife:** -£125,000

**NHS Orkney:** -£68,843

**NHS Shetland:** -£66,515