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Today an update to the Defence Estate Optimisation Programme and the "Better Defence Estate" Strategy has been announced. Our Strategy was built on examination of the Defence built estate across the UK with the aim of taking a comprehensive, long-term and strategic approach to its configuration to enable UK military capability as efficiently and affordably as possible.

Delivering this strategy is a priority for the MOD, and the commitment to invest £4 billion to create a smaller, more modern and capability-focused estate between now and 2040 remains. The Defence Estate Optimisation Programme, which was mobilised with military and infrastructure expertise to deliver the strategy, has now completed assessments supporting the first phase of delivery giving clarity for the next five years.

Whilst we have a long-term strategy, plans will need to adapt to be responsive to our evolving military needs. We recognise that this will cause continued uncertainty for some of our people, their families and local communities. However, where plans are required to change, we will inform our personnel as soon as practicable and we will continue to update Parliament regularly on our progress in implementing the strategy.

Today's announcement confirms that, as a result of assessment work the Department no longer intends to dispose of Royal Marines Chivenor in your constituency, which was initially announced for disposal. We recognise the strength of local feeling and deep roots between Royal Marines Chivenor and the local community. And, acknowledge the campaign you have led to retain Royal Marines Chivenor. Royal Marines Chivenor will now be retained as it has an ongoing defence use. This decision will offer better value for money and better supports military capability.

THE RT HON GAVIN WILLIAMSON CBE MP

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