# John Healey criticises Scottish Government’s refusal to fund Rolls-Royce welding centre as industrial future hangs in balance



The debate surrounding the Scottish Government's funding policies for munitions-related industries has reached a boiling point, as UK Defence Secretary John Healey lambasted these policies as “student union politics.” His comments were triggered by a pressing requirement for £2.5 million from Rolls-Royce, aimed at launching a specialised welding centre in Glasgow. Healey's argument is clear: the Scottish Government’s refusal to support arms manufacturing not only neglects opportunities for the youth but also stifles innovation and jeopardises Scotland’s industrial future.

With unwavering resolve, the Scottish Government has maintained its opposition to funding munitions production, arguing instead for investments geared towards diversifying the industrial landscape, including apprenticeship initiatives. Healey's frustration was palpable as he underscored the pivotal role of Rolls-Royce in supplying military equipment, insisting that the new welding centre would benefit more than just the defence sector. He expressed disbelief that the Scottish National Party (SNP) would turn a blind eye to such a crucial project that could create essential skills and opportunities in Scotland.

Meanwhile, Scottish Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon stood firm in her justification, insisting that maintaining a principled stance against public funding for munitions and nuclear arms is non-negotiable. While recognising the real threats confronting the UK, she reiterated that the government’s commitment to not fund arms manufacture remains intact.

This controversy exemplifies a growing pattern of conflict regarding public financing for arms companies in Scotland. Reports suggest that despite these principles, over £3.5 million in grants have already flowed to arms industries since the start of 2023. Amnesty International has raised alarms over the efficacy of human rights due diligence processes involved in these funding decisions, arguing that they might not adequately uphold Scotland’s international commitments, especially concerning companies tied to human rights violations.

The Scottish Greens have been vocal in their opposition, pushing for parliamentary votes to cease all government support for firms associated with arms dealing, particularly those involved in actions that breach human rights norms, such as military operations in Gaza. They highlight that at least £8 million has been dispensed to various arms companies via Scottish Enterprise since 2019, calling into question the government’s professed principles.

As the Prime Minister gears up for a momentous defence review, the clash over public funding, ethics in governance, and national security will certainly remain a contentious issue between the UK Government and the Scottish administration. While both acknowledge the urgent need for enhanced skills and industrial capacity, the fundamental differences in their approaches underscore a broader divide. This ongoing strife will not only redefine funding strategies but could also significantly impact perceptions of Scotland’s role within the UK’s defence framework, potentially distracting from the more pressing economic concerns facing the nation as a whole.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/not-providing-public-cash-for-arms-student-union-politics-says-healey-CGXO6OBYFNIK3I4E3GNRSPACRQ/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/not-providing-public-cash-for-arms-student-union-politics-says-healey-CGXO6OBYFNIK3I4E3GNRSPACRQ/> - The article reports on UK Defence Secretary John Healey's criticism of the Scottish Government's policy of not providing public funding for munitions, describing it as 'student union politics'. This policy has been highlighted in the context of a £2.5 million funding requirement for Rolls-Royce to establish a specialist welding centre in Glasgow. Healey emphasises the importance of such investments for Scotland's industrial base and the future of young people, suggesting that the Scottish Government's refusal to fund the project is detrimental to these objectives.
3. <https://greens.scot/news/greens-to-force-vote-on-scottish-government-funding-for-israel%E2%80%99s-arms-dealers> - The Scottish Greens have announced plans to hold a parliamentary vote to end all Scottish Government support for companies involved in arming Israel. Despite the Scottish Government's opposition to the bombing of Gaza, over £1 million has been allocated to such companies through Scottish Enterprise. The Greens argue that public funds should not support entities complicit in actions deemed as genocide, urging the Scottish Government to cease subsidies to these arms dealers.
4. <https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/scottish-green-party-debate-scottish-enterprise-funding-for-arms-companies-february-26-2025> - This Scottish Parliament debate, led by the Scottish Greens, focused on the issue of Scottish Enterprise funding for arms companies. The debate highlighted concerns that at least £8 million in grants have been awarded to 13 companies involved in arms dealing and manufacturing since 2019, including significant amounts to Leonardo and Raytheon Systems. The discussion centred on the ethical implications of such funding and the need for robust human rights due diligence processes.
5. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/scotland-amnesty-warns-scottish-government-review-human-rights-checks-arms-sales> - Amnesty International has urged the Scottish Government to review its human rights checks on arms sales. Freedom of Information requests revealed that over £3.5 million in grants have been awarded to major arms companies since January 2023, with no company failing the current human rights due diligence checks. Amnesty expresses concern that this process may not be sufficient to ensure Scotland upholds its international obligations, particularly when funding companies linked to states accused of serious human rights violations.
6. <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-16571> - This motion, lodged by Lorna Slater of the Scottish Green Party, addresses the issue of Scottish Enterprise funding for arms companies. It notes with concern that at least £8 million in grants have been awarded to 13 companies involved in arms dealing and manufacturing since 2019, including significant amounts to Leonardo and Raytheon Systems. The motion calls for the Scottish Government to end all public funding to companies complicit in the arms trade with Israel.
7. <https://greens.scot/news/snp-block-action-to-halt-funding-for-companies-arming-israel> - The Scottish National Party (SNP) has been accused of blocking action to halt funding for companies arming Israel. Despite the Scottish Government's opposition to the bombing of Gaza, over £1 million has been allocated to such companies through Scottish Enterprise. The Scottish Greens argue that public funds should not support entities complicit in actions deemed as genocide, urging the SNP to cease subsidies to these arms dealers.