

Global Campaign on Military Spending – UK

Briefing points in advance of the UK government budget announcement

1 March 2021

UK military spending

- In November 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a very large increase in UK military spending.¹
- Total additional spending is approx. £24bn over four years, i.e. an average of £6bn per year (see table and graphs in appendices).²
- The core military budget in 2020-21 was £41.2bn.³ Accounting for inflation, the increase in annual spending averages about 10%.⁴
- This jump is the highest percentage increase in military spending since UK involvement in the Korean War 70 years ago.⁵
- The spending increase is all focused on the ‘capital’ part of the Ministry of Defence’s budget, mainly on military equipment.⁶
- The main elements of the military equipment budget include: submarines and nuclear weapons (the largest); combat aircraft; warships; armoured vehicles; IT; and weapons.⁷
- Newer areas of spending include: armed drones; military artificial intelligence; cyber warfare; military space technologies; and directed energy weapons (e.g. lasers).⁸
- The spending increase is based on a premise that a highly militarised response to international security problems – based on global deployment of offensive weapons technologies – should remain at the heart of the UK foreign and security policy. We contest this view, and argue for alternative spending.⁹
- The core military budget does not include about £6bn per year of additional spending which the UK reports to NATO. This includes military pensions and some peace-keeping activity.¹⁰

Comparisons with other budgets

International development/ overseas aid

- In November 2020, the UK government announced a huge reduction in spending on overseas aid.¹¹
- The budget for overseas aid is determined with reference to an international target, i.e. 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI). The November announcement was that the UK would reduce its aid budget from 0.7% to 0.5% GNI.¹²
- The actual monetary reduction from 2020-21 to 2021-22 is £3.3bn (see table and graphs in appendices).¹³ This is on top of a reduction from the previous year due to a number of factors, including the shrinkage of the UK economy due to the COVID-19 crisis and the merger of the Dept for International Development with the Foreign Office. No aid spending figures have yet been published for after 2022.

Reducing UK carbon emissions

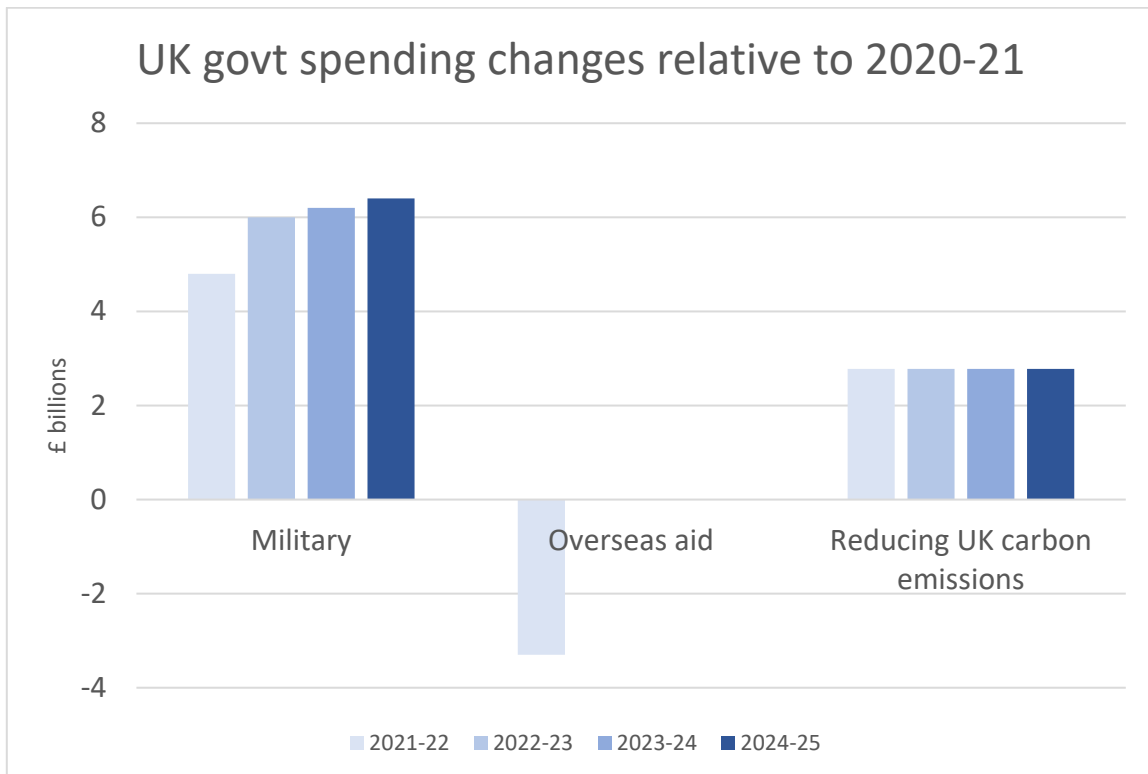
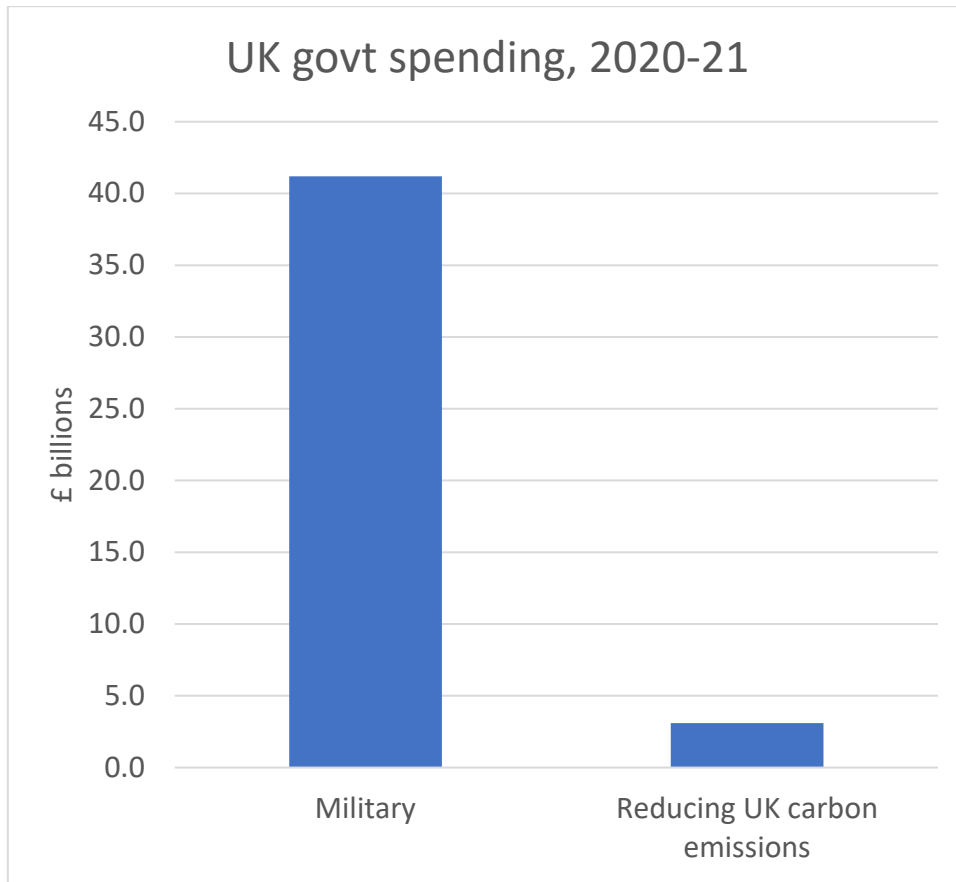
- In November, the government announced ‘The ten point plan for a green industrial revolution’, with a budget of £12bn.¹⁴
- On closer inspection, a maximum of only £11bn is earmarked for spending in the next four years, averaging of £2.8bn per year.¹⁵
- In December, the Committee of Climate Change (CCC) published a report which analysed current and future government spending to hit its reduction targets for carbon emissions.¹⁶
- The CCC estimated that government spending in this area for 2020-21 was approximately £5bn. This included £2bn devoted to the Green Homes Grant (GHG) scheme.¹⁷ The latest evidence is that only £0.1bn of the GHG will be spent in this financial year, meaning total spending is only £3.1bn.¹⁸
- The CCC estimated that annual government spending needs to increase very rapidly to between £9bn and £12bn – and that other (non-budget) measures are also needed to help switch/ stimulate the rest of the UK economy to spend at least £40bn per year on reducing carbon emissions.¹⁹
- Note that other climate-related spending – e.g. overseas aid for climate projects, climate change adaptation projects – are not included in these figures.

This briefing note was prepared by Dr Stuart Parkinson, Executive Director of Scientists for Global Responsibility, <https://www.sgr.org.uk/>

Appendix 1 – Table of UK government spending changes relative to 2020-21 (cash terms)

<i>Spending area</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>	<i>2023-24</i>	<i>2024-25</i>
Military	4.8	6.0	6.2	6.4
Overseas aid	-3.3	na	na	na
Reducing UK carbon emissions	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8

Appendix 2 – Graphs of key figures



References

- ¹ Prime Minister's Office (2020). PM statement to the House on the Integrated Review. November. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-to-the-house-on-the-integrated-review-19-november-2020>
- ² As note 1.
- ³ HM Treasury (2020). Spending Review 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents>
- ⁴ Chalmers M (2021). A New Direction for the Ministry of Defence's Budget? Royal United Services Institute. https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/269_pb_chalmers_final_for_web.pdf
- ⁵ As note 4.
- ⁶ As note 3.
- ⁷ Ministry of Defence (2021). Defence Equipment Plan reports. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/defence-equipment-plan-reports>
- ⁸ As note 1.
- ⁹ See, for example: Campaign Against Arms Trade (2020). Fighting the wrong battles. <https://caat.org.uk/resources/fighting-the-wrong-battles/> ; Scientists for Global Responsibility (2013). Offensive insecurity. <https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/offensive-insecurity>
- ¹⁰ Campaign Against Arms Trade (2020) – as note 9.
- ¹¹ Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (2020). Changes to the UK's aid budget in the Spending Review. November. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/changes-to-the-uks-aid-budget-in-the-spending-review>
- ¹² As note 11.
- ¹³ As note 3.
- ¹⁴ BEIS (2020). The ten point plan for a green industrial revolution. Dept for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ten-point-plan-for-a-green-industrial-revolution>
- ¹⁵ My analysis of: BEIS (2020) – as note 14.
- ¹⁶ CCC (2020). The sixth carbon budget: the UK's path to net zero. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/>
- ¹⁷ P310 of: CCC (2020) – as note 16.
- ¹⁸ The Guardian (2021). Hundreds of millions in green grants for English homes pulled despite delays. 10 February. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/10/hundreds-of-millions-in-green-grants-for-english-homes-pulled-despite-delays>
- ¹⁹ As note 17.