

**GMB**

Mary Turner House,
22 Stephenson Way, Euston
London, NW1 2HD
020 7391 6700
info@gmb.org.uk
www.gmb.org.uk

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Ministry of Defence
Whitehall
SW1A 2HB

Thursday 25 January

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you on behalf of GMB's tens of thousands of members working in both steel and defence manufacturing across the UK.

The announced closure of blast furnaces at Port Talbot steelworks - and the ongoing consultation on similarly closing blast furnaces at Scunthorpe steelworks - means the United Kingdom could soon be the only country in the G20 without the capability to make virgin steel.

Without UK-made virgin steel, we will be forced to rely on importing often cheap, poor-quality steel from other countries. This increased reliance will threaten not only your Government's commitment to green industries, but also our country's national security.

As you will be aware, NATO defence chief Admiral Rob Bauer said last week that war with Russia is a possibility within the next 20 years. However, our country continues to be woefully unprepared for such a conflict.

As GMB has consistently raised, the end of our capabilities to make steel from ore will significantly impact the security of our essential defence supply chains.

At Tuesday's steel opposition day debate your colleague, the Minister of State in the Business and Trade department, refused to answer when asked whether it is her position that this country needs the capability to make virgin steel. This lack of clarity on the Government's position is deeply concerning.

GMB is very clear that we must retain sovereign capability to make virgin steel.

The Ministry of Defence previously intervened to secure the future of Sheffield Forgemasters, and we ask that you act again to safeguard this essential sovereign defence manufacturing capability.

I am therefore writing to ask that you work urgently with your colleagues in the Business and Trade department to ensure blast furnaces at both Port Talbot and Scunthorpe are kept open so that our defence supply chain is protected.

I would also ask that you meet with me and our members working in this supply chain to discuss the challenges they face.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Roberts
GMB National Officer