

**Subject:** MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER GUNNER ST JAMES'S PARK

### **ROYAL REGIMENT OF ARTILLERY HERITAGE**

*The Royal Regiment of Artillery, formed 304 years ago this week, has a unique history and heritage. Much of that is contained within the Royal Artillery Collection, one of only a small number of military collections to be designated as being of national importance by the Arts Council of England. The Regiment is very aware of its responsibilities in this area and has worked hard to change the governance and oversight of its heritage, produce a Heritage Strategy and Plan and make its archives more widely accessible. It has also been developing, in partnership with the County of Wiltshire, plans to create a facility where the majority of its collection could be made accessible to the public.*

*The latter has, for the last three years, been based on creating a new Royal Artillery Museum north of Amesbury and the Regiment's home at Larkhill at a site called 'Avon Camp West'. This site was offered by the Army for the Regiment to lease and confirmed to me as a credible option in writing in both 2018 and 2019. The museum would tell the story of the Royal Artillery alongside the broader narrative of artillery development through the ages, and be complemented by the story of the beneficial relationship between the British Army, Salisbury Plain and Wiltshire over the last 120 years.*

*With imaginative site and building designs, and funding in place, the Regiment was poised to submit its planning application to Wiltshire Council this week. I am therefore disappointed to have received a letter yesterday from the Chief of the General Staff withdrawing his support for the lease of Avon Camp West to the Regiment. He proposes that a 'strategic re-appraisal' be conducted. Regrettably, that means I must pause the submission of the planning application and engage with the Army Headquarters to clarify what this means and the way forward. Our significant financial, staff and volunteer commitment to these discussions and plans were conducted in good faith and this decision came as a total surprise considering the detailed discussions we have had over the years with the Army leadership, and with other stakeholders and interested parties.*

*We are extremely proud of the partnership we have developed with and the support we have received from the County of Wiltshire; we still seek to create a unique attraction with them. I wish to thank many individuals, in Wiltshire County Council, the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership and all the staff and volunteers within the Royal Artillery Museum and other parts of my Regiment for the time and effort they committed that has enabled so much progress to be made. While this delay is most disappointing, I and the Royal Regiment of Artillery remains determined to fulfil our responsibilities to the Nation to ensure our heritage and collection are as widely accessible as possible.*

*Lieutenant General Sir Andrew Gregory KBE CB*

*Master Gunner St James's Park*