



House of Commons
London
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Sarah Champion
Member of Parliament for Rotherham

Immediate release
19 January 2015

Sarah Champion MP speaks out in Parliament for the Rotherham steel industry

Sarah Champion, Member of Parliament for Rotherham, has urged the Government to protect steel industry jobs in her constituency and help strengthen UK steel's position in the world market.

135 specialist research and development jobs are to be moved by Tata Steel from Rotherham to Warwick. In a speech in the House of Commons, Sarah pointed out the unfairness of the decision and how the move may not actually be beneficial to any party. She said:

"The relocation is a lose-lose situation: Tata could lose skilled workers and those workers could lose their livelihoods. I ask today that the Government intervene to support Rotherham's R and D team by working closely with Tata Steel and the unions to establish an alternative solution.

"It is not right that such a concentration of highly skilled workers is lost, particularly as the advanced manufacturing centre's catapult scheme and the steel proving factory are both in Rotherham."

During her speech, Sarah also pressed the Government to ensure that the UK steel industry was able to compete on a level playing field around the world. Currently firms in this country pay twice as much as some other European countries in energy costs. They are also left with business rates which can be five to 10 times higher than their European rivals. On the subject, she commented:

"UK steel finds itself at a severe disadvantage when pitched against manufacturers in the EU and internationally. The Chancellor proposed a review into business rates in the autumn statement. I welcome that, but we need action more quickly than the promised 2016 report. UK steel needs to be competitive now."

Discussing her speech in the House of Commons, Sarah said:

"The steel industry is a vital cog in the economy. It employs almost 7, 500 people in Yorkshire and the Humber alone, 330,000 nationally and was worth more than £45 billion to the UK in 2012.

"My constituency plays a big role in steel – in fact every five seconds an aircraft reliant on Rotherham steel takes off or lands somewhere in the world. That's why it's important that we keep as many jobs here as possible. I don't think it makes any sense to relocate certain jobs to Warwick when much of the workforce will remain in Rotherham. The Government need to step in and find a better solution which would help more people keep their jobs without the need to completely uproot them and their families.

"The Government must also ensure that this country's steel industry maintains it's strong impact and reach across the world. The current business rates and energy costs that steel firms have to deal with are too much and put them at a disadvantage when competing with the world's other companies. Action needs to be taken now to reduce those costs and make sure our steel industry is competitive in the global market."

ENDS

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