



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Armed Forces Community Covenant Signatories Panel**

**Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS**

**Teams**

**Monday, 30 January 2023 at 2.00 pm**

**Present:** Councillor W G Lewis (Chair) Presided

### **Representing Organisations**

Alyx Baharie	SCVS
Moawia Bin-Sufyan	Care After Combat
Major Tracey Brookes	Army
Lt Cdr Andy Davies	Royal Navy
Pat Dunmore	Citizens Advice Bureau
Ross Edwards	Garrison Farm
Wg Cdr Phil Flower	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
Wg Cdr Steve Fry	Deputy Lieutenant
Kirsty Gronow	The Poppy Factory
Tony Hayward	Armed Forces Bikers
Gareth Jones	HMP Swansea
Elliott King	Swansea Council
Sarah Mallaghan	DWP
Nick Marsh	Veterans Club
Lynn Martin	Deputy Lieutenant
Sophie Metcalf	Navy
Andrew Price	Dryad Bushcraft
Adrian Rabey	British Training Board
Emma Reeves	Regional School Liaison Officer – Service Children (West Wales)
Paul Smith	Veterans RV
Stephen Sullivan	Hafal
Kelly Walker	The Poppy Factory
Capt Huw Williams	157 Squadron
Victoria Williams	Veterans NHS Wales

### **Officer(s)**

Gareth Borsden	Democratic Services Officer
David Price Deer	Special Events Manager
Bethan Dennedy	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
Spencer Martin	Third Sector & Trust Fund Commissioning Co-ordinator
Natalie McCombe	Local Area Coordinator

### **Apologies for Absence**

Louise Fleet, Rob Govier, Debbie Hamer, Jon Hinkin, Louise Huxtable-Thomas and Yasmin Todd

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**17 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests from Members.**

None.

**18 Minutes.**

**Agreed** that the minutes of the Panel held on 10 October 2022 be approved as correct record.

**19 Armed Forces Covenant Regional Project.**

Bethan Dennedy reported that the Armed Forces Covenant Duty came into effect on 22 November 2022 and is now law.

How this will impact across the board is difficult to gauge at the moment guidance can be found via the link below:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1116148/Armed\\_Forces\\_Covenant\\_Duty\\_Statutory\\_Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1116148/Armed_Forces_Covenant_Duty_Statutory_Guidance.pdf)

She outlined the initial data received from the recent census which shows around 4.5% of the population in Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend have links with the military, which is roughly in line with the national average.

The current round of Veterans Foundation grants close on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb -  
<https://www.veteransfoundation.org.uk/apply-for-a-grant/>

Armed Forces day 2023 will take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> June and Armed Forces Day Event match funding is available on the website.

<https://www.armedforcesday.org.uk/>

She outlined that a free translation device is available for charities – Helo Blod -  
<https://businesswales.gov.wales/heloblod/helo-blod>

**20 Update from MOD.**

Army

Capt Huw Williams reported that the Christmas period has been fairly quiet, however we have seen some of our Reservists mobilise in support of MoD activities.

The next Military Support Meeting with the Lord Mayor where we will be looking at forthcoming events is scheduled for Monday 11 February. This is where we look at the plan to support future events, areas to be discussed include:

Month of the Military Child – April 23. Event being put on at The Grange ARC for service children on 25 April 23 which could have in excess of 160 young people present. The aim is to have the 3 services present as well as various other organisations.

Kings Coronation – 6 May 23, awaiting direction from the Lord Lieutenants Office as to what this will entail, possibility of an event at St Marys. Initial

discussions had taken place around the possibility of a parade through the city centre, but the road closure costs were proving prohibitive.  
Armed Forces Day/Week – 19-25 June 23 – 19 June @ Neath & Port Talbot with Sat 24 June being the planned Swansea event  
Wales National Airshow – 30 June – 2 July 2023, tables are available for groups/charities in the marquee.

We are also engaging with other local groups including an Asian women's group in relation to briefing them on what the Army Reserve entails and what our role is. This is to provide clarity to our role.

He thanked Cllr Wendy Lewis for the help and assistance that she personally provided to one of our service families. Her actions prevented a difficult situation becoming a lot worse.

### Navy

Lt Cdr Andy Davies provided an update from his service which included that Tawe division continues to operate from John Chard house and is looking to increase its numbers going forward.

Tawe division will provide support to HMS Cambria at their Freedom of the City event in Cardiff in March.

He indicated that the Swansea sea cadets are planning for another year of competition which will hopefully be as successful as last year and they will also be involved again in the Airshow, which had proved a great success last year.

He thanked the Army for the use of the facilities at the Grange by the cadets in readiness for a drill competition on 19<sup>th</sup> February.

### RAF

Wg Cdr Steve Fry outlined he was aligned to 614 Squadron based in Cardiff but who had reservists right across South Wales. He indicated that like the other services the retention of reservists post Covid is proving an issue.

Recruitment remains a major focus going forward, like the other services.

He outlined that in terms of mobilisation and people supporting the regular force from across 614 Squadron area of responsibility, there are reservists who are normally employed in the area in their civilian capacity, who are currently deployed on operations in Cyprus, the Falkland Islands and supporting stations around the UK.

## **21 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.**

Victoria Williams reported that Veterans NHS Wales have had 31 people referred into their service over the last 3 months, unfortunately the service is one therapist down at the moment, so this has obviously impacted on the treatment time which is

around 5 months. The initial assessments though are still being carried out in around 3 weeks.

The next SBUHB Armed Forces Forum meeting will held on 9<sup>th</sup> March, and all panel members are welcome to attend.

She outlined that she had now made an excellent contact within Swansea Prison and had undertaken an initial visit there, she would be also attending the next veterans meeting there as well. The work going on in the prison to support veterans is to be commended.

She stated that the online/in person trial for EMDR had begun, and 2 people had been referred so far, she was still looking for volunteers for the trial.

## **22 Supporting Pupils from Service Families.**

Emma Reeves indicated that she had recently taken over as maternity cover for Yasmin Todd and looked forward to working with members of the panel going forward.

She outlined her personal background and links to the Armed Forces.

## **23 Update from Panel Members**

### Veterans RV

Paul Smith outlined the group had now moved from the Poppy Lounge to Bryn Road Scout & Guide Hut due to issues with parking and are now open on Tuesdays 6-8pm.

The group has also recently started some surfing lessons/cold water swimming at Caswell, and plans are in place to deliver guitar lessons and to start an art therapy group.

### Adferiad Recovery

Steve Sullivan outlined that the change step peer group are now no longer taking any further referrals, as the funding for that stream is coming to an end and will actually finish in March.

They will continue to triage and there is someone covering the phone lines for triage and but they're not taking any referrals as they were doing.

He outlined that Finola Pickwell had finished with the strategic pathway team before Christmas. We now have a have a new manager Neil Lawman who was previously in the peer mentor team. V4P will be carrying on and that is funded until the end of the year. I myself will be continuing to work with the non funded veteran cohort that will include the positive pathways, projects that funding has now ended, but also new projects too.

### Dryadbushcraft

Andrew Price outlined that he runs a community interest company called Dryadbushcraft, who specialise in bushcraft and survival courses on Gower.

He indicated that the company have some rural development plan funding available but it's very Gower specific and it has to be spent by the end of February. We are hoping to run a few sessions, at least for veterans and it's part of a pilot project aiming at establishing the benefits of social prescribing in the outdoors and nature therapy.

If members of the panel had veterans they could potentially refer to the sessions, he asked them to get in touch.

More information can be found at <https://www.dryadbushcraft.co.uk/>

### British Training Board

Adrian Rabey referred to the successful security event held at the Village Hotel in October in conjunction with the UK Border Force who are looking to recruit veterans into the considerable vacancies they have across the country.

He outlined that they had received another grant from the Council, which I'm really grateful for, which has purchased devices and virtual reality headsets, which we've been using now for veterans within the Community who can't make into the centre to do training courses etc, and now will be able to go into interviews.

So we've been posting them out and using them and that's turned into a really good project, so much so now we've actually built our own virtual reality portal, which can be used by the whole community now, and also includes a portal to the civil service and our Proud programme which aims to get veterans and their family members into employment with the Civil Service is still available to join and is fully funded in Wales.

He also detailed a new facilities management course that funding has become available for across Wales, which again is fully funded and is available for service leavers, veterans and their families.

He referred to the links developed with Berwyn Prison which again joins with the Proud programme and is looking for educators, prison officers and administration staff. There is also an offer of up to £10,000 relocation grant for anybody who takes up a position.

He also detailed another round of border force security training that is available up until July in conjunction with Coleg Sir Gar via Welsh Government funding.

### Armed Forces Bikers

Tony Hayward reported that the group is open for any veterans that wish to join them or attend an event. He outlined that The Chair had attended one of their successful events last year.

He detailed that the group have now given out £700k worth of grants nationally to veterans and their families.

Natalie McCombe referred to the grant funding they had received last year which helped host the bikers 'Boyo Bash' last summer, the event had proved a great success and over £3000 was raised towards the charity. This year's event will be held in August and all panel members were welcome to attend.

#### Royal Air Force Cadets/ Royal British Legion

Phil Flower outlined that the Royal British Legion has a large number of events this year in Swansea, which will include the festival of remembrance and a new garden of remembrance, and we've got 4 companies on board with sponsorship to the sum of £2000 to install the garden close to Morgans Hotel.

He reported that the Royal Air Force Association committee in Swansea is now growing again and we've now got 18 members, he thanked Huw Williams for his support and the use of the Grange in West Cross for meetings. He indicated that this year the group have a trip to the Sunderland Museum in West Wales and a trip arranged to RAF Brize Norton and the National Arboretum.

He outlined that the Cadets are also doing really well across South Wales currently with 560 cadets and 180 staff across the area, the aim and impetus is to increase and recruit into these levels again. He outlined the various activities available to the cadets such as kayaking, archery, mountaineering and a camp at St Madoc's Centre in May again. The cadets are also looking to include and utilise the experience of veterans into the cadets programme and experiences and also include the other cadet forces in their activities.

He detailed that 2023 is the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dambusters and there is some discussion around a parade to mark the occasion.

#### HMP Prison Swansea

Gareth Jones reported that they currently have 11 veteran prisoners who are trained as veteran mentors and help fellow veteran prisoners with the daily life and tasks.

The next monthly veterans meeting in the prison will be held on 17<sup>th</sup> February and any interested members of the panel would be welcome to attend.

He outlined the link being developed with colleagues at HMP Parc which will look to build on, and develop the initiatives currently in place in both prisons, for the benefit of the veteran prisoners.

#### Local Area Co-ordinators

Natalie McCombe detailed her role as an LAC for Gower, and outlined that there is an LAC for each electoral ward in Swansea, the LACs main role is to support the local community.

More information can be found at <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/localareacoordination>

### Swansea Veterans Hub

Major Tracey Brooks reported on behalf of the hub as 2 of their members were unable to attend today and outlined the hub is now open at St Helens between 11-1 on a Tuesday and 10-2 on Saturday.

The hub is also now a member of ASDIC Association of Service drop in centres and registered as a safe warm space for the community to use.

She outlined the success of the event held on Christmas Eve which was attended by over 40 veterans and their families.

She indicated she was attending her first panel meeting today and looked forward to working with panel members going forward and attending future meetings, she detailed that she was aware of the excellent work being carried out in the prison as outlined early and her son had taken place in the service children's rugby day which was excellent.

She outlined that she worked in the Army operational executive branch, which deals with all of the continuing legal proceedings of legacy operations like Northern Ireland. So we've got a vested interest in the veterans and assisting them and she referred to the ongoing bill that if it becomes law will undoubtedly have implications for veterans who served in place like Northern Ireland, Afghanistan and Iraq.

### Garrison Farm

Ross Edwards indicated that with the facility they have there is a great opportunity to link in with the green prescribing and social prescribing as discussed earlier in the meeting. Anyone wishing to utilise the facility should get in touch.

### Veterans Club

Nick Marsh outlined that the club has expanded our drop in sessions to two a week now on a Monday daytime and a Wednesday evening.

We are also doing a beekeeping course.

The hilltop retreat, which Swansea Council very kindly funded should be up and running in the spring and the intention is to operate that three times a week on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday between 11 and 3 o'clock.

Again members of the panel wishing to attend the sessions or use the facility when open should get in touch.

The meeting ended at 3.08 pm

**Chair**