



City and County of Swansea

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

Multi-Location Meeting - Lilian Hopkin Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

Monday, 20 January 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present: Wendy G Lewis (Chair) Presided

Representing Organisations

Moawia Bin-Sufyan	Care After Combat
Stephen Boswell	SSAFA
Lt Cdr Andy Davies	Royal Navy
Pat Dunmore	Citizens Advice Bureau
Wing Cdr Phil Flower	Royal British Legion Swansea Branch
Ella Fortune	Air Force
WO1 Rob Govier	HMS Cambria
Kirsty Hanson	Swansea Veterans Hub
Andy Harris	The Poppy Factory
Adrian Leslie	Royal British Legion
Paul Smith	Veterans RV
Capt Huw Williams	157 Squadron
Victoria Williams	Veterans NHS Wales
Simon Winspear	SCVS
Air Cdre Robert Woods	Royal Air Force

Officer(s)

Gareth Borsden	Democratic Services Officer
David Price Deer	Special Events Manager
Natalie Ellis-Burt	Local Area Coordinator
Finola Pickwell	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer

Apologies for Absence

Ruth Birch, Louise Fleet, Thomas Hall, Price, Spill and Sullivan

78 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests.

None.

79 Minutes.

The minutes of the Panel held on 14 October 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

80 South Wales Police.

Chloe Dennis (Regional Economic Crime Protect/Prevent Officer) and a member of the SWP Tarian Team gave the panel an overview powerpoint presentation relating to the issues around the various types of fraud that people should try and protect themselves from.

She indicated she would forward a copy of her presentation for circulation following the meeting.

81 Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer.

Finola Pickwell reported that her role and responsibilities may change going forward following a recent evaluation.

She outlined that Carers UK are currently running a survey to gather view and experiences of veterans that are carers or the carers of veterans.

The new 'Coming Home' comic recently went on sale which focuses on the LGBT+ community and features Ruth Birch of Fighting with Pride. She wished Ruth the very best with her impending move to Devon and indicated she would be a great loss to the military community in Wales. The chair and members of the panel echoed those sentiments.

She outlined her regular e mail update to the forces community which contains news, information and advice called 'Whats Occurrin' and asked panel members if they wanted to be added to the distribution list to get in touch.

She is currently drafting a calendar of events across her area and again asked panel members to send her details they may wish to share/promote.

She also outlined the current funding/grants that are available to groups which cover the following 3 areas:

- Serving Families: On the Move Programme 2024-25 – grants up to £120k for service families impacted by relocation;
- Major Capital Grants Programme – grants from 75-500k towards projects that support significant refurbishment/extensions/new builds for rental accommodation for veterans with housing needs;
- Veterans Foundation – grants from £500 to 30k and salary grants up to 25k a year available;
- She reminded panel members to use the Turn2us toolkit when applying for grants.

She outlined a couple of dates for diaries around the Remembrance period, namely:
25 October – Armed Forces Festival Day in Port Talbot.

1 November – NPT Mayors Remembrance Concert in Great Hall, Swansea University, Bay Campus.

8 November – CCS Lord Mayors/RBL Festival of Remembrance at the Brangwyn Hall, Swansea.

82 Update from MOD.

Lt Cdr Andy Davies outlined that plans continue towards HM Cambria's exercising of their rights to the Freedom of Swansea on 1st March.

He indicated that the service will attend as many of the events planned as they can, and anyone wanting support from the service for activities etc, should get in touch.

Capt Huw Williams reported on what 223 Squadron and 157 Welsh Transport Regiment have been up to in recent months and what we are planning on undertaking in the future.

Since the last meeting we attended Exercise Winter Dragon as part of the Commanding Officers sword, which the squadron won. We have also seen many of our troops attend training courses to increase their competency and deployability, these have included trade, promotion or driving licence focussed activities. Squadron personnel attended many Remembrance events last November and these provided a time of reflection and an opportunity to come together and reflect.

The majority of our people had an opportunity to take some well deserved rest over Christmas and have returned raring to go and hit the ground running and four of our troops have been away skiing in Norway, France and Austria, this shows that the reserves really do offer excellent opportunities to develop yourself.

There is a full program of events being drawn up this year with a Council led meeting to discuss these on Thursday. Once this meeting has been held, these events will be distributed to panel members for their awareness and attendance. Significant events to look forward to in 2025 will be the end of WW2 in Europe in May, Armed Forces Day celebrations on 28 June, Air Show and the end of WW2 in Japan in August.

This November due to a change in timing, will see the Regiment deploying on its annual training exercise, this means that unfortunately attendance at Remembrance events may very well have a smaller representation than in previous years.

He outlined that as stated at previous meetings, he is here to assist where he can, groups are welcome to get in touch and let him know if he can be of assistance or in attendance at events.

Air Cdre Rob Woods indicated that he was attending his first meeting of the panel and looked forward to working with everyone going forward and supporting as many events locally as possible.

He referred to his involvement in a visit later in the week by the Minister for Veterans to north Wales, but which will be looking at and discussing issues across Wales. Feedback can be given in the future.

He also referred to the RAFs plans for around 20 'Town Shows' across the UK this year to promote and encourage recruitment, Swansea will be a venue for one of these and its highly likely it will coincide with the Air Show. It is possible that additional resources could be made available to support the event. More details will follow when known.

83 Swansea Bay University Health Board, Armed Forces Forum.

Victoria Williams on behalf of Veterans NHS Wales, reported that 35 referrals had been received during the last 3 months and of which 25 had opted-in, 18 individuals had been assessed and would receive therapy going forward.

The last clinical network meeting had taken place on 19 December 2024. and was well attended. She re-iterated that all members of the panel are welcome to attend these meetings.

The last meeting received a briefing update from the PRU Team from Brecon barracks which was excellent.

She referred to the SPRING project which is an online initiative for veterans with PTSD, and seems to be working very well.

She outlined that the recruitment of a psychiatrist for the team remains an ongoing challenge.

84 Supporting Service Children in Education in Wales.

No officer present.

Monthly bulletin to Schools can be viewed at [SSCE Cymru :: Monthly school bulletin](#).

85 Update from Panel Members.

The Poppy Factory

Andy Harris outlined his was attending his first meeting following his recent appointment to a new role in the organisation relating to the Navigator Programme which aims to support veterans through various means including advice on various matters like addiction, housing and employment support.

His organisation continues to support veterans and has had referrals from both Victoria and the PRU in Brecon.

Veterans RV

Paul Smith reported that the RV is taking part in a study with Swansea University and So Fit which is looking at the benefits of cold water immersion for veterans.

The group continues to have a regular Sunday dip at Caswell, and will be supporting the 'Dip for Tim' event on 26th January which is linked to a veteran who had unfortunately recently passed away.

The model club continues to meet regularly, and he indicated that the Bulldogs would be holding a quiz on 7th February and all are welcome to attend.

Royal British Legion

Adrian Leslie reported that the latest figures for legions welfare provided and assistance given in Wales, will shortly be available and he would circulate.

Large events are planned this year around both VE & VJ days and an 80th event around Holocaust Memorial Day will also be held on 27th January.

He referred to the Crossfield House Fund which is linked to commemorations for VE & VJ days and funds can be applied for events involving the RBL and which are looking to involve veterans and aimed tackling social isolation and encouraging inclusion etc.

Phil Flower referred to the meeting as outlined by Capt Huw Williams earlier on Thursday being held to discuss the various events planned for 2025. Information will be circulated to panel members afterwards.

Fighting With Pride

Ruth Birch unable to attend but had submitted the following update:

It was recently the 25th anniversary of the lifting of the 'gay ban'.
We also unveiled the winner for the LGBT Armed Forces memorial that will be built at the National Arboretum by the Autumn.

Office of Veterans Affairs – LGBT Memorial Winner Announced
<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/0cowfxl4sJs>

BBC Breakfast News – 12-01-2025 - 25th Anniversary and LGBT Armed Forces Memorial
<https://youtu.be/HgiFTuNYRbs>

Coming Home Comic Issue 2
[Front Row - Asif Kapadia's dystopian film 2073, anthology comic marks 25 years since armed forces "gay ban" lifted, Nick Frost in Get Away - BBC Sounds](#)

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The meeting ended at 2.44 pm

Chair