

Cross Party Group on the Armed Forces and Cadets

AGM Meeting – Chair Darren Millar AM

Wednesday 14th October 2015 1215

Conference Room 21, Ty Hywel, National Assembly for Wales

Full attendance list

Name	Organisation
Darren Millar AM	Chair, AM for Clwyd West
Mia Rees	Secretary
Colonel Lance Patterson	Colonel L Patterson, Deputy Commander, 160 th Infantry Brigade and Headquarters Wales
Lt Col Jim McLaren	Lt Col Jim McLaren OBE RM, Chief of Staff, NRHQ (WWE)
Barbra McGregor	NRHQ (WWE)
Air Commodore Adrian Williams Air Officer Wales - RAF	RAF Wales
Col N R Beard TD DL	Chief Executive, Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for Wales
Jo Dover	Service Delivery Manager & Mental Health First Aid Trainer, Wales & South West England, Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS)
Professor F D Rose	Coordinator at Universities in Support of Wounded Injured and Sick Service Personnel (UNSWIS)
Mark Axler	Director MAON and Community Covenant Outreach Film Project Lead
Lindsay Whittle AM	AM for South Wales East
Angela Burns AM	AM for Camerthen West and South Pembrokeshire

1) Chairs welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the group.

The Chair invited everyone around the table to introduce themselves in turn (see full attendance list above) and listed the apologies received.

Apologies received from:

- David Meilding AM
- Cdre Jamie Miller – Royal Navy
- Brigadier Gamble - Army
- Trevor Edwards, Director of Operations DMWS
- Chris Downward MC, Chair VAPC Wales, Regional Representative and Trustee SSAFA Wales (Hopes to attend the next meeting)

- Dr. Neil J. Kitchiner, Principal Clinician & Honorary Research Lead for Veterans' Mental Health, Veterans' NHS Wales

2) **First anniversary update on the forces transformation to an Adaptive Force Deployable Brigade**

- Colonel L Patterson, Deputy Commander, 160th Infantry Brigade and Headquarters Wales

(Powerpoint which accompanied this presentation is available on request.)

Main points:

- 160th Infantry Brigade became deployable one year ago
 - The NATO summit in Newport drove the speed of the change
- Their original function was UK engagement. Now there are other functions:
 - Engagement with countries overseas to build capability and minimise possible intervention in the future.
 - Contingency operations overseas including war fighting.
- Brigade Priorities include:
 - Providing force elements at readiness from tasks ranging from ceremonial duties to operations overseas and in UK.
 - Resilience.
 - Defence engagement overseas.
- It is important for devolution to be taken in to account by the MOD to ensure consistent outcomes for Service families. HQ Wales is represented in the MOD's devolution forum. An example of issues are:
 - Previous cadet expansion programme
 - Organ donor policy differences
 - Differences in delivery of Resilience
- The Brigade's oversight includes reserve and cadets forces.
 - Patterson explained that Reserve units in Wales are controlled but not commanded by 160 Infantry Brigade so that the Brigade can ask Welsh Reserve units to do things but can't task them.
 - The Brigade commanded 2 Regular battalions and two Reserve battalions (1 and 6 RIFLES and 1 and 2 R IRISH) – all are outside Wales with 1 RIFLES stationed in Chepstow but with a Glos postcode.
- The Brigade's base in Brecon where the Infantry Battle School is also located.
- Reserve unit headquarters are currently clustered in the South East of Wales though there are Reserve Training Centres in the majority of population centres.
- Slide detailed 160 Infantry Brigade and HQ Wales commitments (operations and exercises) which showed that "Wales is operating across the world":
 - Ukraine
 - Iraq
 - Africa – Ebola
 - Afghanistan
- The world's leading patrolling exercise (Cambrian Patrol) is run by the Brigade in Wales each October. This has been a record year with 126 Patrols entered and with 21 foreign teams.

- There is also low level, soft power Defence Engagement ongoing throughout the Balkans, Eastern Europe, South Caucuses and Central Asia ranging from military band support to adventurous training.
- Current UK Contingent planning continued relating to:
 - Possible Fuel Tanker strike
 - Possible Fire Brigade strike
 - Possible prison services strike
 - Possible bomb disposal and terrorist threats
- Patterson referenced the Cadet Expansion Programme and mentioned the hand-outs provided on these developments by the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for Wales which were provided to everyone at the meeting.
- There was plenty of progress being made in regards to the Armed Forces Covenant.
- There is still a growing requirement to recruit for the reserves.
 - The civil service recruitment drive at the Cardiff City Stadium was successful
 - A key element is building on employer engagement in support of Reservists.

Questions from the Group:

Chair: Covenant Fund – What are the key differences?

- The bids are submitted centrally and then sent back to Wales for them to screen and prioritise. Following that they are passed down to the regional groups and then back up the chain with recommendations.

Chair: Are we getting a good amount of bids in Wales?

- Yes. There is a good amount and people are becoming aware of how the process works.
- Most bids are coming via Armed Forces Champions and Local Authorities.
 - There was input from Air Commodore Adrian Williams who sat on the Covenant Board for Wales.

The chair used this opportunity to draw the Group's attention to the briefing providing an update on cadet forces in Wales from Nick Beard, Chief Executive, Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for Wales.

Beard provided feedback:

- The Association received a warm reception from the Minister.
- The Minister is keen for Wales to be part of the cadets Expansion programme.
- Currently they are waiting for the MOD to feedback to the Minister/his staff.
- The Chair provided background to these concerns
- Beard confirmed that it is a tri-forces initiative
 - There is still a lot of detail to work out regarding distribution between all 3 services.
- Beard confirmed that AMs should wait before contacting schools about the positive developments.
 - There will be £3 million for Wales and that is likely to impact 25 schools.
- Patterson emphasised the need for more detail to be hashed out and the impact that such moves might have on current ACFs.

- Regarding CCF development in schools the decision will be up to Head teachers and their Governors.

ACTION: Write to the Minister expressing an interest in how this will develop.

3) Presentation by Professor F D Rose Coordinator at Universities in Support of Wounded Injured and Sick Service Personnel (UNSWIS)

(Powerpoint which accompanied this presentation is available on request.)

- UNSWIS is a network of Universities who have committed to assist the Armed Forces community.
- Rose explained the development of UNSWIS:
 - The idea started when a University based physiotherapist visited Headley Court.
 - They started to ask what Universities could do to help Veterans.
 - Once people has gone through therapy getting them into training/work experience was the next big challenge.
 - There was already businesses involved in these kinds of projects but no Universities.
- The initial consultation spoke to:
 - 1/3 of all Universities
 - Service Charities
 - Businesses already working with the Armed Forces community
- The Defence Career Partnering Steering Group were supportive of the idea
- Universities have a UK wide footprint
- Universities are multimillion pound businesses and have enormous infrastructure
 - There is a lot of employment alongside academic departments as well as resources
- What UNSWIS does:
 - Taster sessions: What goes on at a Uni? Opening eyes past stereotypes.
 - Advisory session: Talking to subject specialists. 'How do I get from A to B in my career?'
 - Shadowing and work experience – often with a member of staff (also ex-military) who acts as a mentor.
- Universities have also done trips/visits with groups of 15 (approx.) people at a time which some people prefer.
- Worked with Specialist Employment Consultants (SECs) but there was a lack of demand coming from them.
 - There was regional variation but generally uptake was low.
 - The scheme was therefore extended to include veteran's family members.
- UNSWIS receives referrals from a number of prominent military charities.
- Procedure for setting up placements:
 - Phone call
 - Contact University
 - Meeting with person and involved parties
 - What would be most useful for them?
 - Is the request reasonable for the University?

- Different to big companies/ public sector similar projects as it is very bespoke.
- To date 150 requests have been received and 50% of those result in actual experiences.
- They receive feedback from 1/3 of the people helped.
- UNSWIS is not a charity
- The current challenge is to identify a sustainable future for UNSWIS

Questions/comments from the Group:

Mark Axler: Since the Armed Forces Covenant was established in May 2011 what sort of a difference has it made to the vital work you do?

- It hasn't made a big difference and we didn't apply for a Community Covenant grant.

Patterson: Is there room for future expansion? E.g. working with reservists?

- That would make it a bigger exercise and would be likely to require a different set up.

Patterson: Will talk to his team about promoting UNSWIS.

It was noted that unfortunately only two universities in Wales are taking part.

ACTION: Write to all Universities in Wales about UNSWIS.

Angela Burns AM: Has meetings with few Universities coming up (including Cardiff Met next week) and will mention UNSWIS.

4) AMG Business:

- Re-election of Chair Darren Millar – Proposed by Angela Burns AM and agreed by the Group
- Re-election of Secretary Mia Rees – Proposed by Angela Burns AM and agreed by the Group

5) Community Covenant Outreach Film Project Trailer and information

Mark Axler, Director MAON and Community Covenant Outreach Film Project Lead

(Copies of the project trailer and Axler's speaking notes are available on request)

- Wales premiere of the Project trailer
- Wholly funded by the Community Covenant Grant Scheme
- Axler's background:
 - Served in the Army for over 20 years
 - Founded MAON 10 years ago to pioneer change solutions to the challenging problems affecting Public Services and the Armed Forces Community transition and integration in Education, Employment Health, Mental Health, Housing and Welfare.
 - The project was inspired by Mark's sense that one of the ways commitment can be turned into action is by enabling people who are helping change lives for the better to inspire others to do so by sharing their stories.
- The Community Covenant Outreach Film Project was endorsed to contribute to the overall aims of the Community Covenant by making positive films about the impact and outcomes of the Community Covenant and Grant Scheme and releasing the

films within a Community Outreach Education Information Engagement Programme across the UK.

- The Project Trailer - called the *Community Covenant in Action* - celebrates the positive results being achieved and reminds us there is more we can all do together.
- Project Outcomes
 - Increase understanding, awareness and support for the Community Covenant,
 - Encourage the Nation, Defence Society and Civil Society to pledge support and honour it.
 - Show and cascade a visual way to learn practical lessons from others.
- Thank you all for all you are doing to support people in our communities who are serving or have served and their family members.

Questions/comments from the Group:

Chair: There needs to be more engagement with other services engaging with the covenant e.g. the NHS

Patterson: Veterans engagement in prison is a good scheme

Williams: Police Forces – still needs more work

Chair: Health Boards have Veterans Champions but what are they doing?

ACTION: Invite Peter Higson to our next meeting to discuss the NHS Wales response to the Covent.

6) Discussion: Military visits to schools - Feedback from the debate from the Chair

Chair noted that the recent petition submitted to the Petitions Committee called for an outright ban to stop the Armed Forces recruiting in schools.

Chair summarised the debate:

- Deputy Minister was supportive of the Armed Forces continuing to visit schools.
- National Assembly Armed Forces Scheme Members were vocally supportive which was excellent.
 - Chair noted that it is only the Navy left to host a member's visit.

Chair suggested the Forces due to visit schools should invite AMs to join them to show what they do.

7) Chair asked for AOB but there was done

Meeting closed at 1325