

Welcome to the First Veterans Scotland Newsletter

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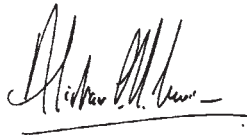
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We have had an encouraging year in Veterans Scotland with notable success in cementing links with the Government and Parliament in Scotland and with the MOD and COBSEO in London.

Under the energetic and able leadership of our Chairman we have firmly established our position in veterans affairs, not of course for the sake of Veterans Scotland as an institution, but for the demonstrable benefit of veterans throughout Scotland. This is all very good but perhaps even better is the continuing evidence of real co-operation between all the members of Veterans Scotland. I am delighted to see

the general recognition that together we can collectively achieve so much more for the veterans who need our help; I am proud to be associated with a group of charities that is so obviously doing so much good. Happy New Year to you all and let us look forward to 2009 and a year of even greater achievement.



Sir Alistair Irwin
President, Veterans Scotland



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A View From The Chair

This year continues at its usual frenetic pace. As well as my representational roles at COBSEO and other charitable forums, I have also been involved, together with other Veterans Scotland colleagues, in the first round of the Scottish Government Veterans Fund grant awards.

As you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, Ministers have decided to make the awards to ten worthy projects. Whilst £80,000 a year will not solve all of our needs, it is a most welcome and generous contribution by the Scottish Government to charitable work undertaken to support veterans. We will shortly release details of the application process for the 2009/2010 grant applications. All I ask is that you give serious consideration to submitting a bid; the more bids we receive, the better able we are to judge priorities correctly and to ensure that we are on the right track in terms of supporting the veterans community in Scotland. So get those bids in when the next round opens early in the New Year.

A further piece of work which will require us all to think about the way ahead relates to the new "Armed Forces Day" (current working title) which will be held for the first time in 2009, on 27 June. I am a member of the MOD working party which is looking at this event, which will basically be the old "Veterans Day" modified to include the Armed Forces. We will keep you informed of developments but, in the meantime, if any of you have any ideas, points or suggestions to relay to me, please do not hesitate to contact me as soon as you can.

Finally, I am always interested to hear how Veterans Scotland may assist you: you can either contact me via Bob McFarlane at New Haig House, or call me direct on **0131 624 8520** or at ron.smith@espc.com

A happy new year to all.



Ron Smith
Chairman



Scottish Parliament Sets Up Veterans Group



The first meeting of the Cross Party Group on Supporting Veterans (CPGSV) was held at the Scottish Parliament on 30 September 2008. This was a real breakthrough in getting recognition from policy makers on the importance of supporting veterans and it was gratifying to see the level of support for our cause.

The Group was set up to create a forum to discuss issues affecting the veterans' community in Scotland in order that those responsible for shaping policy recognise that the needs of some veterans may be different from other members of society. The meeting was attended by Stewart Maxwell, the Minister for Communities and nine representatives from all political parties within the Parliament,

representatives from Veterans Scotland, Veterans Policy Unit MOD and the Armed Forces and Veterans Issues Team at the Scottish Government.

As you would expect the first meeting dealt mainly with process, however VS took the opportunity to brief MSPs on the major issues affecting veterans today, which included housing, health and welfare. In response the Minister reiterated the Scottish Government's support for all veterans and welcomed the setting up of the CPGSV. It was agreed by all that the first issue to be discussed in detail would be Housing and that this would form the focus for the next meeting.

MSP Members

Jeremy Purvis - Chair
 Jackson Carlaw
 Stewart Maxwell
 Mary Mulligan
 Keith Brown
 Trish Godman
 Joe Fitzpatrick
 Nanatte Milne
 Kenny Gibson

External Members

Ron Smith - Veterans Scotland
 Jim Panton - Poppyscotland
 Ian Ballantyne - SVH
 Douglas McKenzie - RBLS
 Martin Gibson - Erskine
 Struan Macdonald - VPU UK
 Alistair Murphy - Scottish Government

“the Minister reiterated the Scottish Government’s support for all Veterans”

Secretary’s Snippets

Erskine Edinburgh to open in November 2009

Scottish Veterans Housing open new flats in Edinburgh

Veterans Days to continue

VS reaches 42 member organisations

A Thanksgiving service for all Servicemen and women who have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan was held in Stirling on 27th October

45 veterans from Alloa and Clackmanan were presented with Veterans’ badges at a ceremony held in Tillicoultry on 15 December

Scottish Armed Forces Day will be held on 27 June 2009. Watch this space.

Scottish Veterans Fund

The Scottish Veterans’ Fund will make £240,000 available over the next three years, specifically aimed at projects that deliver new or innovative approaches to veterans’ issues, or that seek to develop areas and activities that are not currently funded by either the Scottish Government or the MoD. The benefits that projects bring to ex-Service personnel, their families and their dependants will be the predominant measure of any work undertaken, rather than the scale of any work.

The maximum level of funding available for individual projects will not exceed £10,000 in order to assist as many projects as possible. Where projects are expected to exceed £10,000, applicants will be advised to explore alternative avenues, such as the Veterans Challenge Fund or other charitable organisations and foundations. The Fund will be managed on behalf of the Scottish Government by Veterans Scotland.

The first sets of grants were made in December 2008 and among the successful applicants were.

- Scottish Association for Mental Health/ Combat Stress.
- First Base Agency - Dumfries
- Poppyscotland
- Freight Design
- Scottish Poverty Information Unit
- Erskine
- Scottish Veterans’ Residences

The next allocation will be made in April 2009 and all applications should be in by the end of February 2009. See the VS website for an application form.



Veterans Welfare Service – Who Are They?

The Veterans Welfare Service (VWS), part of the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency, exists to enhance the quality of life for veterans, beneficiaries of SPVA pensions and compensation schemes, and their dependants.

Under Veterans UK, VWS works in partnership with statutory and non-statutory bodies, ex-Service charities and local community service providers, and liaises with War Pensions Committees and In-Service Personnel.

VWS in Scotland has offices in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness. The team of 10 Welfare Managers and five Welfare Assistants offer a home visiting service and support clients at the point of leaving service, responding to key life events or other periods of welfare need.

For more about the VWS and local VWS contacts visit www.veterans-uk.info/welfare/contact



Who Are Veterans Scotland?

Veterans Scotland, which is a registered Scottish charity, is the successor of the Scottish ex-Service Charitable Organisations (SESCO). It is a company limited by guarantee and was incorporated on 19 November 2002.

VS has two part-time staff and is organised into a Pillar structure centred on:

- **SUPPORT** - fronted by Poppyscotland.
- **CARE** - fronted by Erskine
- **HOUSING** - fronted by Scottish Veterans Homes
- **MEMBERSHIP** - fronted by Royal British Legion Scotland.

Veterans Scotland’s objectives are to relieve suffering hardship and distress and to promote the relief of need and education among the veterans’ community.

To do this, Veterans Scotland acts as a coordinating voice for the benefit of the ex-Service community in Scotland without in any way interfering with or jeopardising the work of ex-Service organisations acting individually or in concert.

“Veterans Scotland acts as a coordinating voice for the benefit of the ex-Service community in Scotland”



Business Start-Up Loans For The Veterans’ Community

A Stirling businesswoman has become the first person to benefit from a new initiative designed to help veterans start their own business. Poppyscotland, who front the Support Pillar for Veterans Scotland, awarded Denise Ward an interest-free loan to enable her to start Pet Royale Ltd, a professional pet care service.

Denise, from Whins of Milton, was eligible for the Small Business Loan Scheme as she served in the RAF as an Assistant Air Traffic Controller for six years. She will use the money to buy equipment and publicise her home-based business, which offers

boarding for dogs, cats and small pets and provides services such as grooming and a pet taxi service.

The revolutionary loan scheme, solely for the benefit of veterans, is the first of its kind to be operated in Scotland. Veterans who apply for a loan are given access to a business advisor, who helps them complete a business plan, which is then presented to a Poppyscotland Awards Panel. If the applicant can demonstrate a sound business proposal and cash-flow forecast, they are awarded a loan of up to £7,500.

Those interested in finding out more about the scheme, can contact Dot Pringle at Poppyscotland on **0131 550 1568** or email d.pringle@poppyscotland.org.uk to discuss their business idea.





Gardening Leave Has Passed Another Milestone!

This month we appointed our first Administrator who will take over running the office from Anna Baker Cresswell, who founded Gardening Leave in April 2007 to provide Horticultural Therapy for the veterans from the Combat Stress treatment centre at Holly bush House. The Pilot Project is based at Auchincruive, 15 minutes from Hollybush in Ayrshire.

Thank to the generosity of the Pears Foundation, Gardening Leave recently commissioned Jacqueline Atkinson, Professor of Mental Health Policy at Glasgow University to research the clinical benefits of Gardening Leave to veterans with combat-related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other mental health troubles. Anna Baker Cressell said "Every time a veteran comes back to Gardening Leave I see the evidence

that we must be doing something right with my own eyes. However, in the evidence-based climate in which we live where every treatment intervention needs to be evidence-based to satisfy funders and clinicians alike, this research is crucial to the future success and development of Gardening Leave."

Gardening Leave, like Combat Stress, is tri-service. This summer the veterans built a show garden (for under £50!) which won a Gold Medal at Ayr Flower Show. A positive message that this unique and very special group of people are able, skilled and highly resourceful in spite of the many challenges they live with on a daily basis in 'Civvy Street' with the mental health troubles which have befallen them.

www.gardeningleave.org

Veterans First Point

NHS Lothian is now offering a first point of help for veterans living in Scotland.

First Point is a pilot established to provide a one stop shop information and advice point for Scottish veterans.

This innovative service, a first of its kind in Scotland, has been developed by veterans, for veterans and is delivered by trained staff, including veterans, and veteran volunteers.

"The community-based service will be the first point of contact for all veterans"

The community-based service will be the first point of contact for all veterans to find out where to get the best advice or support to meet their needs. This will include advice on available information, local support networks, social services, employment, education and healthcare services.

At present, there are some 40 different organisations providing specialist support to veterans, such as Poppyscotland, Combat Stress, Veterans Scotland, Erskine and the Royal British Legion Scotland. First Point is working closely with these organisations and charities to provide a service which will rapidly assess the needs of veterans and refer them as quickly as possible to the organisation most suited to provide that support.

The pilot is funded by NHS Lothian, the Scottish Government and the Ministry of Defence.

First Point will open towards the end of March 2009 and at this stage contact details are not available. Check www.veteransfirstpoint.org.uk for updates and information.

V.S. Meets with Scottish Service Chiefs

Veterans Scotland Pillar Heads met with the three Heads of the Armed Forces in Scotland on 9 December. As you expect this was a meeting of like minded individuals and it was gratifying to see the enthusiasm with which the Service Chiefs endorsed the work of all the Service related Charities working in Scotland.

The main outcome of the meeting was the setting up of a committee of serving personnel and veterans to discuss areas of mutual interest. This team will meet early in the New Year and the outcomes from the group will be reported upon in future issues of Veterans Voice.

Scottish War Blinded

The Scottish War Blinded was founded in 1915 to provide welfare and financial support to ex-Service men and women who lost their sight in the service of their country.

A change to its constitution now also allows welfare and financial support to be given to veterans who suffer visual impairment and are registered blind or partially sighted, subsequent to, and unrelated to their service.

Applications are invited from any veteran, resident in Scotland, who has served in the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom, including National Service and Territorial Army, and also from members of the Merchant Navy and Nursing Services who have been in active service.

In addition to an annual grant being awarded, additional funding may also be provided in cases of hardship. Respite and holiday breaks are also available.