

WORCESTERSHIRE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT



July 2015

WELCOME

Welcome to our latest Worcestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant newsletter.

It has been great to see so many people show their support for our servicemen and women over the last couple of months; from last weekend's celebration of the 7th annual Armed Forces Day to the 70th anniversary of VE Day back in May.

Looking ahead we will shortly be launching a new survey to find out about the experiences of our armed services communities living and working in Worcestershire. The survey will capture data on an on-going basis and we will report back our findings in future newsletters.

And finally I am pleased to report that we are close to finishing our booklet to help ex-service personnel and their families navigate public services in Worcestershire. It has been a real partnership effort to pull together and will help make it easier for Service personnel, families and veterans to access the help and support available.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Rob Adams'.

Cllr Rob Adams

Chair of the Worcestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership

PRIME MINISTER ANNOUNCES EXTENSION TO EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMME

On the 7th Armed Forces Day, the Prime Minister has announced that the government will extend its employment support programme to the whole of the armed forces.

The [Career Transition Programme \(CTP\)](#) helps personnel leaving the service to turn the skills, experience and qualifications they have gained into a successful career outside the military. Over 200,000 ex-servicemen and women have benefitted from the CTP since it was launched and the changes announced today will mean nearly 3,000 partners and reservists can get help in finding work.

In a further show of support for the military, the government has also challenged the private sector to sign up to the [armed forces covenant](#).

In a letter from the Defence Secretary, Michael Fallon, all FTSE 350 companies are also being challenged to show their support for the armed forces by signing the armed forces covenant. They could do this by taking on more veterans and ex-service personnel, putting more measures in place to support their reservists and supporting partners of service personnel by guaranteeing special leave if needed, or flexible working.

Some of the big names that have pledged their support and signed up to the armed forces covenant this week include Lloyds Banking Group, JP Morgan, and the AA. Only 39 of the FTSE 350 companies are currently signed up to the armed forces covenant – that's just 11%.

Since the armed forces covenant was enshrined in law in 2011, the government has committed over £150 million, and this year has confirmed a permanent commitment of £10 million a year.

COUNTY COUNCIL'S CHAIRMAN FLIES THE FLAG FOR ARMED FORCES DAY

Chairman of Worcestershire County Council, Ian Hopwood has attended a special flag raising ceremony at County Hall on Monday, 22 June.

As well as local authorities, town and parish council plus local groups have been raising the Armed Forces Day flag to show their support for our servicemen and women, and the wider Armed Forces community.

The Armed Forces Day Flag was raised at 11am outside the main entrance of County Hall by Cllr Hopwood, with special guest Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Hitchman also in attendance were Clare Marchant, the Chief Executive of Worcestershire County Council, Adrian Hardman, Leader of Worcestershire County Council and Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Holcroft, the Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire.

The raising of the flag at county hall took place ahead of the national event on Saturday, 27 June, which will be held this year takes place in Guildford.

Cllr Ian Hopwood, Chairman of Worcestershire County Council said: "It is a great and special honour to able to raise the flag on behalf of our Armed Forces. I joined the army after I left school and served in the colours for 9 years so there is a personal connection for me. The Armed Forces day is a real opportunity for people to remember all service men and women who gave their today for our tomorrow."

Armed Forces Day is an opportunity for people across the nation to given their support to the service men and women past and present.



QUEEN'S ROYAL HUSSARS IN FREEDOM MARCH THROUGH WORCESTER

Local regiment the Queen's Royal Hussars marched through Worcester City Centre on Saturday, 27 June, exercising the right conferred on them last year when they were awarded the Freedom of the City.

The event also marked the national Armed Forces Day and underlined the importance of their close relationship with the City.

Around 220 soldiers marched through the city centre with swords drawn, bayonets fixed, drums beating and guidon (standards) flying.

The parade also featured around 100 veterans and 50 cadets with the salute taken outside of the Guildhall by Lieutenant General Tom Beckett CBE colonel of the regiment, Lord Lieutenant of Worcester Lt. Colonel Patrick Holcroft and Mayor of Worcester, councillor Roger Knight.

After the parade there was an afternoon of family activities at Worcester Racecourse, giving people of all ages the chance to get their hands on genuine military hardware and meet the soldiers face to face.

Lieutenant Colonel AJH Porter, Commanding Officer of the Queen's Royal Hussars, said: "It's an enormous privilege for the Regiment to be marching in Worcester, a city with which we have a long and close relationship. We place huge value on our links to the city and are delighted to be able to meet the community after the parade."



About the Queen's Royal Hussars

The Queen's Royal Hussars (QRH) was formed in Fallingbommel, Germany, on 1 September 1993 from the amalgamation of The Queen's Own Hussars and The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars. It is an armoured regiment equipped with tanks. The Regiment has a long and glorious history reaching back to the late 17th Century.

After moving to Catterick in 1995, the new Regiment became the first to be deployed in Challenger 1 tanks to Bosnia in January 1996 with NATO's British-led Implementation Force IFOR. It spent its time as part of 2nd Canadian Multi-National Brigade, and was awarded The Canadian Forces Unit Commendation, the first time that this had been awarded to a foreign unit, and the first overseas commendation received by a British unit since the Korean War.

The Regiment subsequently converted to Challenger 2 tanks, in which an Independent tank squadron deployed to Kosovo in 2001, with the rest of the Regiment deploying later that year in the dismounted role.

The Regiment deployed three times to Iraq between 2004 and 2008 – the last time on Operation Telic 13 where it was engaged in various mentoring tasks with Iraqi forces in Basra City, Umm Qasr and Az Zubayr. As the final Operation Telic, The Queen's Royal Hussars were intimately involved in the drawdown from the main British base and spent many hours escorting convoys to and from Kuwait.

In 2011 the Regiment was deployed to Afghanistan on Operation Herrick where it had one squadron employed in an infantry role, one squadron mounted in Warthog vehicles, and one squadron working with the Afghan security forces. It was a very challenging tour.

In 2013 the Regiment, having fully recovered from its Afghanistan tour, trained on its tanks on the training areas in Germany and Canada.

In June 2014, the Regiment deployed C Squadron to Operation Herrick 20 in Afghanistan, as the Warthog Group. This role involved crewing Warthog armoured tracked vehicles and operating with dismounted infantry to disrupt insurgents in Helmand during the drawdown of British troops from Camp Bastion. They were one of the last British combat units on the ground in Helmand.

The Regiment has established in and maintains a strong sense of allegiance to Worcester and Worcestershire. This has resulted in the recruitment of many county residents, with 110 applicants joining up since 2004. The Regiment continues to support the Army effort in the local area in the form of a Worcester-based Regimental recruiter.



A Challenger 2 main battle tank with The Queen's Royal Hussars (QRH) during a live firing exercise at Hohne ranges in Germany.

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WORCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT @ NORTON PROJECT

Earlier this year Norton Worcestershire Regiment Group was awarded £11,270 to deliver a programme of activity to enable a greater education of the history of the Norton Barracks and provide a lasting legacy of the contribution and impact of the Worcestershire Regiment on the local community and beyond.

Work is underway which will see a number of elements delivered over the coming months including:

- The installation of four 'lectern style' external interpretive boards in a prominent location which will include information on the history of the barracks and the Worcestershire Regiment.
- The creation of a village trail which will highlight historical points of military interest. This will be complemented by the production of a tri-fold pamphlet.



The programme also looked to establish an annual shooting competition between the Mercian Regiment and Norton Shooting Club.

The inaugural competition took place at the Norton Community Games on Sunday, 21 June and also featured a team made up of local veterans.

David James of the Norton Worcestershire Regiment Group said: "Two of the veterans were very confident at the start of the day with them both claiming 'in their day' having been amongst the best shots in the army, albeit 40 years ago. Their confidence was not misplaced with them winning the competition and former Colour Sergeant of the 1st Battalion, John Walters being awarded the best shot on the day."



He added: "That the veterans won made the competition all the better, although perhaps not for the Mercian's and the shooting club!"

Another element of the programme is the creation of a 'Commemorative Garden' for all the soldiers who joined the Worcestershire Regiment over the years. This will be hosted within the St. Peters Garden Centre.

The garden has been designed by children from the local Norton-Juxta-Kempsey First School following a competition organised by the group. Their winning design is being transformed into a special garden and is set to be unveiled at an opening ceremony on 16 July by the High Sheriff of Worcestershire, Sir Anthony Winnington, with many other guests in attendance.

THE COVENANT FUND IS COMING!

We know that people out there are eagerly awaiting the new Covenant Fund and wondering what it is all about. It is currently in development, but we are able to give you a preview of what is to come.

The Covenant Fund will have 4 broad funding themes now and in future years. They are: removing barriers to family life; extra support after service for those that need help; measures to integrate military and civilian communities and allow the armed forces community to participate as citizens; and non-core healthcare services for veterans.

The themes will shape the fund, and annual priorities will ensure that it stays focussed and current. For 2015/16 these priorities will be projects that support:

- local armed forces community integration projects
- the coordination and delivery of support to the armed forces community
- veterans in the criminal justice system.

To address the priorities, we will make funding available for:

- small grants up to £20,000, primarily for community integration projects, which will be launched and open to applications in mid-August, with a deadline in mid-September. The deadline for the second round will be before the end of 2015
- large grants up to £500,000, for more strategic, higher impact projects (one round this year) which will launch in mid-August with a deadline in late September

Decisions on both small and large grants will be made by a national panel based on the recommendations of regional panels.

We have learnt from previous schemes and have made improvements. The new Covenant Fund will be more strategic and more closely targeted at areas of need. It will have new aims, new rules and a new application process.

We know there is demand out there for this funding, so we understand it's important to get the Covenant Fund running first and foremost, and then to keep consulting, listening, reviewing and improving it month on month and year on year. It is, after all, an annual £10 million which is available in perpetuity.

More information on criteria and eligibility will be publicised in late July, ahead of the launch of the formal application process in mid-August.

Watch this space!

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BEACONS LIGHT UP WORCESTERSHIRE FOR VE DAY ANNIVERSARY

Over 100 people braved the weather to join veterans and civic dignitaries witness the lighting of the VE Day beacon on Friday, 8 May.

People of all ages, serving armed forces personnel and veterans attended the short ceremony at the Worcestershire Beacon. Worcestershire was one of more than 200 Beacon locations around the country, who marked the 70th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day with the lighting of a special beacon.

Her Majesty, The Queen lit the Principal Beacon outside Windsor Castle followed by beacons all over the country. Worcestershire's beacon which had been specially produced for this event with a unique burner head in the shape of a V for victory and was lit by Lord Lieutenant Patrick Holcroft at 9.32pm (pictured below).



Up until 15mins before the lighting the weather looked like it may have dampened the celebrations but the skies cleared enabling the beacon to be seen across many parts of the county.

The event was delivered by Worcestershire County Council with support from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and Malvern Hills District Council.

Pam Davey, who attended the ceremony in her role of chairman of Worcestershire County Council said: "It is important that we remember the sacrifices of World War 11 and express our gratitude to those armed forces, many of whom were killed and many more who were severely disabled both physically and mentally. Also to the civilians who lost homes and loved ones. The sacrifices of a whole generation were made to ensure our freedom and our way of life".



"The large number of people who participated, many with their own memories of family members, in the lighting of the beacon, made it an extremely moving event and a fitting tribute to those who gave so much."

"I would like to extend my thanks to the Tenbury branch of the Royal British Legion and veteran Nick Carter who read a fitting tribute. The event was an especially memorable way to end my year as Chairman of Worcestershire County Council."

Jack Hegarty, Chief Executive from Malvern Hills District Council added: "The lighting of the Beacon was a significant event that we were very proud to be a part of.

"We also raised the Union flag at the council house on the morning of Friday 8 May, and we stopped the election count at 3pm to observe the two minute silence."

Robert Allen, Station Commander from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service added: "Our Malvern crews provided fire and trauma cover throughout the event, using our off road vehicles to access the Beacon. We were delighted to be asked to be involved in this event, hosted by Worcestershire County Council, to mark the 70th anniversary of VE Day."

BRIGADIER LEADS THE WAY TO HIGH PERFORMANCE

Local businesses can learn how to secure future success through enhancing leadership and management skills, at Finditinworcestershires breakfast and networking meeting next month.

Finditinworcestershires 'Leadership and Management Event' will take place at Worcester Warrior's Sixways Stadium on Tuesday, 21 July from 6.45am to 9.30am. Attendees will hear from Finditinworcestershires keynote speaker, Nicky Moffat, CBE, Britain's highest ranking female officer (pictured), who will discuss how you can embed leadership and management learning in to the fabric of your organisation, enabling continuous development and build of skills that will help you to compete at a global level.

At Finditinworcestershires event, delegates will also have the chance to take part in breakout workshops across a range of subjects, including:

- Managing Talent in the Business – Cathy O'Donoghue, HR Champions
- Leaders' Ability to Manage Management – Hannah James, HR Champions
- Helping senior management teams to Understand their Personalities – Steven Pete, PERA Growth Accelerator
- Employee Engagement in Decision Making Process – Julie Bettridge, HR Champions

Kathryn Wagstaff, Project Manager of Finditinworcestershires, said: "We have already had an incredibly positive response to next month's event. Nicky will be able to give the county's businesses an insight into improving leadership and management skills using innovative and successful army methods that will drive performance improvement."

Attendees will also take part in Finditinworcestershires open networking session, where an average monthly attendance of more than 130 local business owners, directors and decision-makers can make new contacts. It is fast gaining a reputation as the place to talk business in Worcestershire.

Places can be booked by visiting www.finditinworcestershires.com where unregistered local businesses can also sign up for free.

Exhibition stands will be showcasing products and services from all around the county, alongside a complimentary breakfast.



FORMER BARRACKS SITE IS NOW HOMES FOR HEROES

The second instalment of Rooftop Housing's '15 in 15' series of developments was recently unveiled at the site of the former Norton Barracks near Worcester.

In recognition of the area's historic links to the military, the development of ten new homes has been built specifically for those with a connection to the armed forces. The scheme also forms part of their commitment to the Worcestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant which they signed up to in 2012.



The development comprises: 4 x 1-bed ground floor flats (affordable rent); 2 x 2-bed first floor flats (affordable rent); 2 x 3-bed houses (affordable rent); 2 x 3-bed houses (shared ownership).

At the opening event, Rooftop staff and new residents were joined by Colonel Richard Maybery QGM, Deputy Commander 11 Signal and West Midlands Brigade who took a tour around the properties. He is pictured here with Rachel Lathan, Chair of Rooftop Housing Association (below), who is married to a former sailor so had a particular interest in the successful outcome of the scheme. Also pictured is Jack Hegarty, Managing Director Wychavon District Council and Nicola Inchbald, Chair Rooftop of Rooftop Housing Group.



If you are, or now someone who is, an ex-serving or retired member of the armed forces, please note that one of the shared ownership homes is [still for sale](#).

FORMER RBL SITE TO BECOME ARMED FORCES HOUSING

A FORMER Royal British Legion Club is to be turned into homes for current and former members of the Armed Forces and their families.

Wychavon District Council has agreed to sell the site in Millridge Way in Hartlebury to Rooftop Housing for £88,000. The land will then be used to build eight high quality, affordable homes for those connected to the Armed Forces.

The homes will also all be carbon neutral, meaning they will emit no carbon dioxide resulting from energy used within the properties. This will be achieved by measures such as high quality wall insulation, designing them so no more than 80 litres of water, per person, per day is used and the use of technology including solar thermal panels, biomass boilers or wind turbines.

As part of the deal, Hartlebury Parish Council will get £10,000 to spend on community facilities. The development will be partly funded by £249,000 from money from the sale of council homes under the Right to Buy scheme.

Wychavon District Council has controlled the building since November 2013 after the RBL club was forced to close due to a decline in membership numbers and attempts to re-let it to other organisations failed.

The building has become a magnet for anti-social behaviour and repeatedly targeted by vandals and fly-tippers.

The scheme was approved by councillors at an Executive Board meeting last Wednesday (10 June).

It is not the first time Wychavon District Council and Rooftop Housing have worked together to build homes for Armed Forces personnel. They have previously combined to create ten affordable homes at the Norton Barracks site.

Cllr Richard Morris, portfolio holder for economy and housing on Wychavon District Council, said: "We're very proud of the service and dedication members of our Armed Forces give to ensuring the safety and security of this country. This scheme is in keeping with the great work of the Royal British Legion that operated on this site and it is fitting we use it to further support our servicemen and women and their families."

Cllr Rob Adams, chairman of the Worcestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant, said: "When the ten homes at Norton Barracks were built, Wychavon's housing team had 470 people apply so that shows the need for this type of accommodation. It's fantastic news Wychavon, together with partners, are responding to that need by bringing another scheme forward."

If you have any feedback, contributions or suggestions on this or future issues please contact Alan Smith, Worcestershire Partnership Relationship Manager by email at asmith3@worcestershire.gov.uk or call on 01905 822836