



EAST MIDLANDS
RESERVE FORCES AND CADETS ASSOCIATION

Annual Report

2020-2021



At the heart of the community

www.eastmidlandsrfa.co.uk    



At the heart of the community

East Midlands Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) is one of 13 RFCAs across the UK. We are a community-based organisation with the responsibility of advising and assisting the Defence Council, the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force, on matters that concern Reserves and Cadets. We promote the value of our people at the heart of Defence, to create a favourable environment for improved recruitment and retention.

Our buildings are located across the East Midlands, ensuring that Reserves and Cadets are an integral part of their local communities. We utilise our strong relationships with community contacts and employers to ensure that Defence personnel are treated fairly and with respect.

We have dedicated local expertise, facilities and support functions, and operate as a not-for-profit organisation. Our extensive portfolio of buildings are offered as venues to hire at affordable prices, with all funds invested back into the facilities for use by the Reserves and Cadets or their activities.

Our volunteer members act as local ambassadors across the region, ensuring the interests of our Armed Forces community remain at the heart of the community. Members are volunteers who include representatives from the single Services and Cadets, but also include people from local authorities, businesses, education and charities, each seeking to support and promote our core messages.

Our Vision

Our vision is to be the essential, effective and enduring partner that supports Reserves, Cadets and the wider Armed Forces community in the region.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide professional and efficient support to the Reserve Forces to enable them to deliver military capability through the single Services. We do this through maintaining estate compliancy and safety, employer and infrastructure support, and regional representation.

Our mission for Cadets is to assist with recruitment, provide administrative and communications support and representation in the local community, as well as maintaining the estate.

We are proud to be at the heart of the community.

A Welcome from our Chairman

It is difficult to believe that one year after sitting down to write my first Annual Report introduction under lockdown restrictions, I find myself writing my second under very similar conditions. In last year's narrative I hoped that we would return to normality with the October 2020 round of County Committee meetings. Sadly, that was not to be and we have just completed our spring round of meetings 'virtually', using technology that we have all become frustratingly familiar with.

The year has been one of home-working and virtual meetings for most of us. However, the RFCA Estates Team, assisted by our Professional Support Staff, have been perhaps busier than usual. They have kept the estate compliant, by facilitating inspections and work by contractors, despite many properties having been unoccupied or little used for much of the year. In doing so, they ensured that the estate was ready when both Reserves and Cadets began to resume training late in 2020, but only briefly, as the lockdown was re-imposed at the start of 2021. They have also, of course, ensured that those sites used by the Army Reserve to support Covid operations have been kept operational.

While engagement events have faded, as Covid restrictions prevented people meeting face to face, our Engagement Team organised a number of virtual presentations by the Armed Forces Engagement Teams, to introduce employers to all three Services.

The last 12 months have seen the production of reports which will affect the way in which the RFCAs do business in the future. The closest to home is the Sullivan Tailored Review, which recommended that the 13 regional RFCAs become a single Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) in order to meet Treasury rules for government funding. Work to implement the Review's recommendations has been stalled by MOD's focus on Covid, but it is intended to establish the new body by April 2022 (at least in an initial form). The RFCAs are represented on the implementation team and are focussed on maintaining the role of the volunteer in the new organisation.

Many of you will have read reports in the media on Global Britain in a Competitive Age, known as the Integrated Review, which embraces security, defence, foreign policy and overseas development. It sets out the Government's vision for the UK's role in the world over the next decade, together with an

action-plan up to 2025. The complementary paper, Reserves 30, describing the part that our Reserves will play in that vision, was published in early May and its implications will be worked through in the coming months.

These two papers will influence significantly the work of the RFCA NDPB and we will do all we can to ensure that the new organisation remains central to the important part the Reserves and Cadets will play in future plans.

Finally, the RFCAs were also subject to an Estates Review in 2020, and a review of Health and Safety in early 2021, the full outcomes of which have yet to be determined. So, never a dull moment and plenty to keep us occupied in the next few years.

I would like to thank all of you for your continued interest and support this year. County Committee meeting attendance has remained high, despite the fact that we have been staring at each other across a computer screen. Sir John Peace, our President, has had an inaugural year like no other, but we both hope that in the next 12 months we can at least begin to resume the face-to-face activity that is such an important part of our business.

As always I would like to record my gratitude to our Lord-Lieutenants, who take such an interest in the activities of their county's Reserves and Cadets, and to our Board for their very active involvement in managing our business. I look forward to working with all of you to develop our influence and affect in the coming years.

**Colonel Nick Hile
Chairman**





Reserves: Pillars of our community

There are over 3,000 Reservists across the East Midlands who work with the Regulars in the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force.

They are highly trained women and men, often deployed on operations at home and overseas. They commit to an annual training programme in their spare time, gain new skills and qualifications, and are paid for their time. Reservists are a vital part of the Armed Forces and form around 19% of the nation's defence capacity.

Reserves in the East Midlands

The majority of Reserves in the East Midlands are in the Army, reflecting the difference in size of the three Services' Reserves at a national level. However, as might be expected of 'Bomber County', Lincolnshire has a greater number of Royal Air Force (RAF) Reserves. Although the East Midlands has only one unit of the Royal Navy, HMS Sherwood is active across all of the region's counties.

This year has shone a spotlight on Reservists across the UK, as many of them provided a highly skilled, fast response in support of the NHS, taking on a wide variety of roles. They have been involved in MACA – Military Aid to Civil Authorities; in local logistics planning; distributing PPE; helping build Nightingale Hospitals; administering tests to the public; testing hauliers; and most recently, in the distribution and administering of Covid vaccines. The scale, complexity and uncertainty of the pandemic created a situation not unlike that of combat, and the Armed Forces are specifically trained to deal with such demands. Those Reservists not called upon to assist during the pandemic, have continued to train, under social distancing rules, and to be deployed on overseas operations also.

East Midlands Reserves making a real difference

Royal Yeomanry (RY) Reservists received praise from the Deputy Commander of the Field Army for their work with NATO Allies in Poland. The 6 month deployment on Operation CABRIT was one of the first of its kind, where a joint RY and 1st Queen's Dragoon Guards unit was led by Reservists. They were supported by Reservists from 103 Battalion Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. As well as taking part in multi-national training exercises, they also completed a cold-weather operations course. Sixteen soldiers also

battled the snowy conditions and freezing temperatures to complete a Potential Non-Commissioned Officer Cadre for promotion from Trooper to Lance Corporal.

Lt Courtenay Hallwood, Troop Leader on Op CABRIT, commented: "I had a Regular Vehicle Commander and one other Regular soldier in my Troop, so it's been great seeing the playoff between them bringing their skills to the equation and then also seeing what they've learnt from the Reservist soldiers in the Troop too."



3rd Battalion Royal Anglian on Op ROSE

Soldiers from Leicester based 2 Company, 3rd Battalion Royal Anglian Regiment spent two weeks supporting the Department of Transport. They were carrying out Covid-19 testing of all lorry drivers and hauliers bound for continental Europe. One of the Leicester Reservists, Private Jack Bramfield (26) commented: "I joined the Reserves to escape the day-to-day humdrum of work-life and I wanted to experience new challenges. I think the biggest challenge has been the weather and the language barrier, but we've found some novel ideas for overcoming that with a selection of strange hand signals and translator apps on our phones."



HMS Sherwood continue training in lockdown

Although Royal Naval Reserve training was suspended from December to April Reservists on deployment were allowed to continue their activity. HMS Sherwood was also able to send a record seven new recruits to Phase 1 training at HMS Raleigh, and were delighted when five of them passed out at the end of a tough two weeks. Virtual attestations continued and interest levels in recruitment have remained high and will continue to feed the recruiting pipeline. HMS Sherwood also welcomed a new Commanding Officer in October, Commander Stephen Grayson, who took over from CO Rob Noble, previous incumbent for six years.



RAF pushing into new frontiers

Reservists from the RAF have also been supporting the NHS with Covid-19 efforts. Senior Aircraftsman Chris Madden, 7010 Squadron RAuxAF, was called up as part of MACA (Military Aid to Civil Authorities) in May 2020. Chris was assigned to work alongside a Royal Logistic Corps Mobile Testing Unit (MTU) out of Kendrew Barracks in Rutland. "The MTUs can be set

up within 10 minutes and act as a rapid response unit. It was made up of both Regular soldiers and Reservists, and so was a prime example of the 'Whole Force' concept, whereby Regulars and Reservists work together seamlessly on operations. I was slightly apprehensive about being a solo airman in an Army unit, but the team were fantastic!" said Chris.



Cadets: Investing in the future of our communities

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound and protracted impact on Cadet activity across the four Ministry of Defence sponsored Cadet Forces. It has reduced the opportunity to conduct training, both in the UK and overseas, curtailed the ability to support civic events such as Remembrance weekend and restricted wider interaction with local communities. And yet throughout these challenging times, Cadets and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers have continued to demonstrate those qualities that mark the Cadet Forces out as net contributors to our society; qualities such as leadership, loyalty, selflessness, determination and courage.

Reservists provide a link between the military and our local communities

Reservists offer a trained capability but they also provide a critical link between the military and civilian communities. This link will become increasingly important as the latest Defence Review and Reserve Forces 30 Review hones the Whole Force concept and focusses on where the Reserves can be most effective. All three single Services have also recognised that specific, technical skills are required to ensure resilience for the future, and so increasingly, expertise in areas such as cyber and data analysis will become targeted skills for recruitment.

Despite Covid-19 making circumstances more difficult, operations and exercises by Reservists in the East Midlands have continued. This year, that has included deployments to Poland, the Falklands, Cyprus, Afghanistan and many parts of Africa, including Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Mali and Kenya. These overseas operations and exercises provide invaluable experience of working with the Armed Forces of other nations, learning from them, and sharing the UK's high-quality training and expertise.



A recent study conducted by the University of Northampton has shown the benefits that membership of the Cadets can bring, not only to Cadets and Cadet Volunteers, but also the very positive impact that Cadet inclusion has to society as a whole. The study (released in May 2021) has proven that those young people who participate in Cadets develop key skills which improve their self-efficacy, resilience and future employment prospects. This in turn has a profound impact on society as those who are members of the Cadets, or have been members of the Cadets, are less likely to require the use of NHS services, are less likely to be excluded from school, are more likely to gain good qualifications which in turn, increases their lifetime earning potential. All of these individual benefits have a wider and deeper positive impact on society as a whole.

Across the East Midlands, there are currently just over 10,000 Cadets and just over 1,300 Adult Volunteers (pre-lockdown figures). The Cadets comprise of four Cadet Services (Combined Cadet Force, Sea Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force and the Royal Air Force Air Cadets). These Cadets are distributed across 6 counties, occupying over 166 Cadet locations. The effect of COVID-19 on Cadet numbers has yet to be measured, but as we cautiously begin face to face Cadet activities, the true impact of the pandemic will be seen. But training activity has not ceased completely!

The vast majority of Cadets and Adult Volunteers have moved to on-line and virtual training, ensuring that Cadets remain engaged and included. In addition, there has been no reduction in the tempo of activities or the workload of those who toil tirelessly in the background, performing unseen, mundane, yet crucial tasks which allow the Cadet and Reserve environments to flourish. A dedicated team of staff from the East Midlands RFCA Professional Support Staff (PSS) have throughout the pandemic, continued to ensure buildings are safe and prepared, ready for re-engagement when restrictions are lifted. The dedication of the PSS at HQ and at Cadet County level has been exemplary during these challenging times.

2021 will undoubtedly continue to present challenges to all across the Cadet landscape, but one particular thread that has run through all aspects of the Cadet organisation has been co-operation and teamwork. The combined efforts of the Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, those volunteers from across the regions who make up various supporting committees and the permanent staff who turn the wheels in the background, all combine to ensure that the young people of the East Midlands are ready to re-engage in excellent training activities which are challenging, innovative and fun as restrictions are lifted.





CCF Cadets become Master Cadets

Two Cadets from Brooke Western Trust CCF, Northamptonshire, won places on the prestigious Master Cadet course, run by the Army Cadets, of which only 12 CCF Cadets nationwide were offered places. Cadet Sgt Josh Haigh and Cadet Sgt Paul Ile were both very proud to receive the accolade. Josh said: "Cadets has opened my eyes to wider careers and helped me realise my potential." Paul commented on the skills he has acquired: "The CCF has allowed me to stand up in front of people and talk with confidence. It has also given me leadership skills." Both received a letter of congratulations from Brigadier Brown, Royal Anglian Regiment and Deputy Colonel Cadets.



Lincs ACF Cadets took part in a Bake-off to celebrate VE Day 75.



Sisters Cerys and Tegan Aplin, of North Hykeham Army Cadet Force, Lincs, achieved something quite unique by being awarded the highly esteemed position of Lord Lieutenant's Cadet, in consecutive years. In a virtual investiture held on Zoom, the Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire, Toby Dennis, welcomed Cerys and thanked Tegan for her service.

Cerys, aged 16, commented: "It's absolutely amazing to be nominated as the Lord Lieutenant's Cadet. When Tegan got it, I was really proud of her, but with sibling rivalry, I felt a bit jealous. I thought, that's what I want to do – it spurred me on. Hearing that I was a candidate, I was over the moon."



Two RAF Air Cadets were interviewed by BFBS Forces TV after helping out at their local community hub, packing and delivering food and medical parcels.



RAFAC Warsop Cadets getting back to face training, with social distancing in place.



Rushden Sea Cadets challenged themselves to row, swim, cycle, walk or run the distance from Rushden to Tokyo, venue for the postponed Olympic Games.



Four Notts ACF Cadets raised over £1,000 for charity Combat Stress with a 'March in March' challenge.

Cadet Force Adult Volunteers: Contributing to our Community

Cadet Force Adult Volunteers are essential to the successful running of our Cadet units. They inspire others through their dedicated volunteering, sharing their knowledge to help develop our young people.

Whether Sea, Army or Air Cadets, all deliver a structured programme of activities for young people aged 10-18 (depending on the Cadet Force). This can include sports, canoeing, first aid, cyber training, fieldcraft, gliding and many qualifications such as Duke of Edinburgh and Cadet Vocational Qualifications (CVQO).

CFAVs need no military background, just a passion to help develop young people. A comprehensive training programme is provided for all new Adult Volunteers and many find their experiences and qualifications benefit their civilian careers also.



Volunteers hit 120 years of service

Four Cadet Force Adult Volunteers from D Company, Leicestershire, Northants & Rutland (LNR) Army Cadet Force (ACF) were this year awarded the 3rd clasp to the Cadet Force medal, totalling 120 years' service to the ACF.

The clasps were awarded to CSMI Jay Bithell, SMI Juliet Rogers, SMI Donna Sullivan and SMI Darren Bristow. All have held various roles at Company and County level over the past 30 years and have positively contributed to training across all aspects of the ACF.

MBE for RAF Air Cadets volunteer

Squadron Leader Alyn Thompson, an adult volunteer with Royal Air Force Air Cadets (RAFAC), received an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours list. Squadron Leader Thompson, of South & East Midlands Wing RAFAC, commissioned 40 years ago and just four years later, became Officer Commanding of 1211 (Swadlincote) Squadron. The unit has gone on to win multiple awards for excellence, amongst them the Morris Trophy for best large unit in 2009 and again in 2017, an unprecedented achievement. Squadron Leader Thompson is also a member of the East Midlands RFCA Derbyshire County Committee.



Employer Engagement

Building relationships with the business community

Our Employer Engagement team deliver a government campaign to continually improve the understanding of the role of our Armed Forces and to support their needs. We develop mutually-beneficial relationships with businesses and organisations in all sectors, in order to support the employment of Reservists; to improve transition to civilian life for those leaving the Forces; and to improve career opportunities for Service spouses and partners. The campaign also supports Adult Volunteers in the military sponsored Cadet organisations.

The cornerstone of our relationship is the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC), which also provides an opportunity for employers to recognise publicly the value that serving personnel, Regulars and Reserves, veterans and military families contribute to our country; across the UK, over 6,800 organisations have signed the Covenant, with almost 700 in the East Midlands. This year, we have targeted business sectors including small businesses, Councils, GP Practices and education. The results have meant 152 Armed Forces Covenants signed in the year.

Those who sign the Covenant gain access to a range of Defence benefits: access to recruitment platforms targeted at Service-leavers and Service spouses, with transferrable skill sets; a positive impact to reputation and corporate social responsibility; access to free personal development and leadership training delivered by the military; and are offered discounted rates on versatile and affordable venues for hire across the UK. Employers also gain acknowledgment of their support through the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

152 Armed Forces Covenants signed in the year



Employer Recognition Scheme

This year brought a record number of awards, with 17 Gold, 31 Silver and 109 Bronze awards across the East Midlands, showing much needed support for the 200 Reservists deployed to support the NHS in fighting the pandemic.

The MOD's Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Awards recognise those employers who support Defence personnel and advocate for others to do likewise.

Bronze award-holders are self-nominated employers who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant and pledge their intention to be Armed Forces friendly.

The Silver Awards recognise employers who demonstrate support for Defence personnel and employ at least one member of the Armed Forces community (Reservist, Service-leaver, military spouse or Cadet Force Adult Volunteer). They have established HR policies supportive of Reservist employees and actively communicate these to employees.

The Gold Awards highlight those employers who actively advocate and support Defence personnel, communicating both internally and externally to the wider community. They demonstrate significant support for Reservists through policies such as additional paid leave, to enable Reservists to fulfil their military training and mobilisation commitments. This year, the Gold award criteria has evolved to recognise organisations that provide significant support to Cadets and Cadet units.

This year there were a massive 152 Signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC). Holders of the AFC are also invited to learn more about Defence and involve their staff in professional development through events run by the single Services. Covid restrictions meant that virtual events replaced many of the more usual unit briefings with around 60 employers attending each from across all the counties.

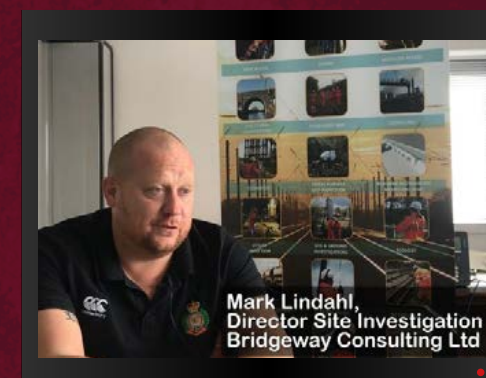
17 Gold ERS Awards

31 Silver ERS Awards

109 Bronze ERS Awards



Notts Fire & Rescue won a Gold ERS in 2020



Bridgeway Consulting were one of 17 Gold ERS winners



Employer Engagement case studies

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL)



The University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2015 and committed to supporting the Armed Forces community. In 2018, the Trust

joined the NHS Employers 'Step into Health' initiative, enabling service leavers and their families to find careers in the NHS; it currently employs 40 such individuals. The Trust also received a Gold Employer Recognition Scheme Award to reflect their exceptionally positive support of their Reserves and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and their proactive advocacy for the Armed Forces. In 2019, the Trust achieved 'Veteran Aware' status, with the aim of driving improvements in NHS care for the Armed Forces community.

Over a number of years the Trust has supported the wider Armed Forces community, by regular attendance at the Regional Resettlement Centre, recruiting for 222 Medical Squadron (based in Leicester), supporting 'Walking with the Wounded', researching military connections for the centenary of WW1, relocating the Trust's war memorials and, on two occasions, deploying staff to Kenya with 2 Medical Regiment. The organisation has also ensured engagement at the highest level by appointing an Armed Forces Champion who is also a member of the Trust Board.



The Trust has been at the forefront in the fight against COVID-19, leading research and featuring in the top three Trusts nationally for COVID-19 survival rates. The Trust has also benefited from its commitment to the Armed Forces. During the pandemic, its close relationship with the Armed Forces came to the fore, when it was ably assisted by Army personnel who were deployed during the second wave. The deployment was a major success and certainly raised the morale of all involved. Integration of these soldiers was made all the easier by the Trust previously accepting clinical and non-clinical placements from the Armed Forces for work experience. The mutually beneficial nature of The Trust's relationship with the Armed Forces is evidenced by its adoption of a Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) process used in the Armed Forces to support its own staff impacted by the pandemic.



"Over the past six years, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust has maintained unwavering support for our Armed Forces community, despite unprecedented operational and financial pressures and a global pandemic. We pledge that no member of the Armed Forces community should face disadvantage accessing healthcare and that those injured in service are cared for in a way which reflects the nation's moral obligation to them, by healthcare professionals who have an understanding of Armed Forces culture. We also aim to ensure Service Family members retain their place on any NHS waiting list, if moved for Service reasons, and that Veterans receive priority treatment for conditions which relate to their service, subject to clinical need."

Colonel (Retired) Ian Crowe
Trust Non-Executive Director
and Armed Forces Champion

Logistics company Pall-Ex win Silver

Pall-Ex (UK) Ltd was awarded the Silver Employer Recognition Scheme Award in July 2020, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. As an International palletised freight distribution network, Pall-Ex employs over 500 people, with many staff having served in the Armed Forces before entering the logistics industry. As a result of this, the business recognises the value that former service personnel and reservists bring to every aspect of its operation, and this was one of the driving forces that led Pall-Ex to signing the Armed Forces Covenant.

At a time of global crisis, Pall-Ex was grateful to employ so many staff with Armed Forces experience, in roles ranging from drivers to Managing Directors, whose consistent and high-quality work in key-worker roles ensured the country kept moving. One-to-one consultations with all staff were undertaken at the start of the pandemic, to assess individual circumstances, allowing the business to continually offer tailored support to all staff, including Reservists.

Continuing to develop as a forces friendly employer was the target set in late 2019, as Pall-Ex made the commitment to reach towards the Silver ERS Award. It worked with the team at the East Midlands RFCA to implement new practices and policies to support not only veterans, but Reservists too, with the Human Resources team introducing flexible leave policies to support both Reservists and the families of serving personnel.



Kevin Buchanan, Pall-Ex Group CEO, has led the business as it strives to support the Armed Forces community since signing the Covenant in 2019. On achieving Silver, he comments: "Pall-Ex is all too aware of the exceptional value brought by Armed Forces veterans and Reservists. Their organisational ability, dedication and reliability are just some of the many qualities that they bring to our business. These were certainly on show during the Covid-19 pandemic, where we relied on their steadfast work ethic to keep the country moving. We are committed to continually improving our policies and making Pall-Ex the employer of choice for the Armed Forces community."

Silver ERS 2020 Award winner Wright Logistics Services Ltd

Jim Wright, of Wright Logistics Services, has been working with Defence Relationship Management for over 22 years. Many years ago, whilst working for Asda, he had six Reservists deployed at the same time. The Asda staff wanted to send parcels and letters to show their support, but no information was available. So, Jim got involved to help bridge the gap, and that was the start of his journey with the Armed Forces community.

In 2020, Wright Logistics Services were awarded the Silver ERS Award, which as a sole proprietor company is highly unusual, but Jim explains exactly why he was honoured to receive the accolade.



"I think everyone should sign the Armed Forces Covenant. What the Armed Forces do for us, at home and abroad, is

underestimated and taken for granted. These people go above and beyond to protect us, and they deserve our complete support."

Jim is Chair of the Employer Engagement Group in Northants, as well as being a member of the East Midlands RFCA Northants Committee. He takes every opportunity, be it a business meeting, a Veterans breakfast or school careers event, to promote the values of the Armed Forces community. His advocacy has led to around 30 companies signing the Armed Forces Covenant.

Jim particularly enjoys the challenge of turning those who are reticent about employing Reservists into advocates: "Once you explain the quality and reliability of military trained personnel, and the transferable skills they have which benefit all types of organisations, they soon get on board. Supporting your Reservist to go on training for two weeks means you get a more-rounded, better trained individual on your staff. And you are also supporting the security of the country and your business."

Estates

The past 12 months have been an unusually complicated time for the Estates Department. Although use of the estate has reduced, as both Reserves and Cadets paraded at home, the Estates Department was still required to ensure that all of the properties it is responsible for maintaining remained compliant with legislation and regulations. Thus, our contractors continued to undertake legionella checks, asbestos surveys, electrical fixed wiring tests and the myriad of other inspections that come under the heading of Statutory and Mandatory Inspections and Tests (SMIT). The Estates Team met these challenges head on and have continued to ensure that the Estate is safe, compliant and fit for purpose.

In 2020/2021, Estates carried out a total of 3291 SMIT inspections; of these only 288 identified failures, all of which were subsequently remedied. Despite the reduction in estate use, we also received 1,907 fault reports. These faults can range from faulty door locks to leaking roofs. All are repaired if funding allows, and if not, are discussed with site operators to ensure that they understand any residual risk that might remain until sufficient funds are obtained to correct the fault.

At the time of writing, the construction of the new workshop and servicing bays at Sobraon Barracks in Lincoln is nearing completion. As might be expected Covid has impacted on both material and contractor availability, so there have been some delays, but all involved are delighted with the quality of the new facility.

Works started in May on a new building for 2425 (Nottingham) Sqn RAFAC at

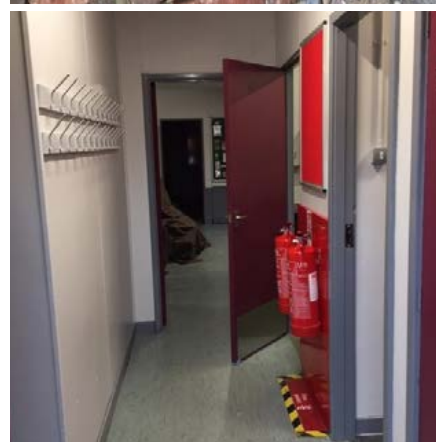
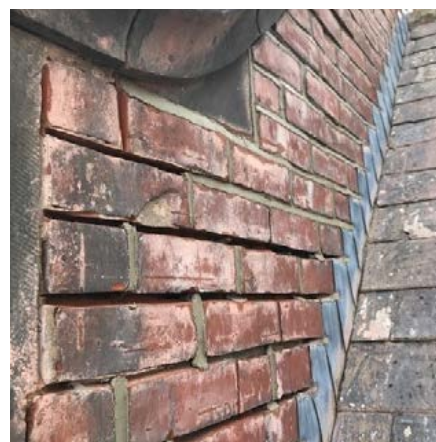


Nottingham Airport. This will be a significant enhancement for a well recruited RAFAC squadron and should be completed and handed over in December.

The Estates team was fortunate to secure additional funding throughout the year for works projects. This has been used in conjunction with Regionally Generated Income produced by Alternative Venues activity to carry out numerous improvements across the estate, such as:

- Improved CCTV to increase security at Foresters House and Carlton ARCs (Army Reserve Centres), and Buxton Joint Cadet Centre
- New drill hall floor at Loughborough ARC to replace a floor damaged by damp
- New water main at Carlton ARC to replace an old, leaking system
- The provision of safe pedestrian walkways and road markings at all ARC and major Cadet locations
- Major roof repairs at Ulverscroft Road and Brentwood Road ARCs and Rothwell ACF
- Gable wall repairs at Belper Joint Cadet Centre
- New windows and redecorations at Retford Joint Cadet Centre
- Substantial resurfacing of the main car park area at Ulverscroft Road ARC
- Estates has also assisted the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) by carrying out the enabling works for a new Networks Equipment Room at Foresters House ARC.

We continue to support the DIO with the management of adaptation work to the homes of Service personnel who have been injured while serving. Each of these projects is unique, challenging and time consuming. However, it is important for us to ensure that those who have been injured while serving their country, are able to live in their own homes which have been adapted to accommodate their injuries. It is rewarding work.



It is anticipated that the following works will be carried out in the very near future as funding is secured:

- Refurbishment of the shower and toilet facilities at Foresters House ARC for HMS Sherwood
- Replacement windows and asbestos removal at St Marks Road ARC, Corby
- Replacement boiler at Newark Joint Cadet Centre

Looking ahead, it is understood that funding will be tight and savings will be required to be made. Estates will quite rightly continue to come under scrutiny to ensure that our work is undertaken as efficiently as possible and that we eliminate all unnecessary expenditure.

Next year will see the commencement of one more large-scale building project with the provision of new facilities for 103 Battalion REME at Derby's Kingsway ARC. However, the results of the recently conducted RFCA Estates Review should be available shortly and we can anticipate a programme of works arising from that as we transform the estate into one suitable for the Reserves and Cadets of the 21st Century.



Alternative Venues

Maintaining our Estates is a costly business and this is part funded through income generated from our Alternative Venues – a catalogue of our properties that are available to hire. They offer affordable, versatile and secure spaces, right across the East Midlands.

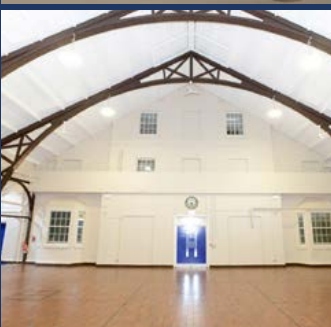
Inevitably this year, we have not been able to promote and fill our venues as normal, as bookings tend to be event-led. However, we have continued to work closely with some of our core customers to whom it was essential that they maintained an on-going service. Customers such as the National Blood Service and Nottinghamshire Police have appreciated our continuing in a Covid safe manner.

Our sites offer large halls, conference facilities, professional kitchens, disabled access and audio visual equipment. Some also offer accommodation, up to 150 people, and are in easy to reach locations in the heart of our communities.

We hope to open up our Alternative Venues in line with national guidelines and look forward to welcoming back both existing and new customers.

"We have been using numerous Army Reserve centres throughout the UK for several years now. The facilities are in a very good and clean condition, and the staff involved are courteous, professional and efficient, always helpful with dates requested and bookings made. They provide an excellent space, especially with social distancing needed during the current pandemic."

Thank you for supporting the essential collection of life saving blood donations on behalf of the NHS." NHS Blood



Financial overview

East Midlands RFCA is funded by multiple Ministry of Defence and single Service sources to deliver its three mandated Defence outputs of Estates, Engagement and Cadets and Youth.

Administration and staff costs, including recruiting and training, saw slight rises in accordance with inflation during 2020/21.

Estates Management expenditure saw an increase of £93k due to Regionally Generated Income (RGI) funded work and maintenance.

DIO Infrastructure costs have remained steady this year.

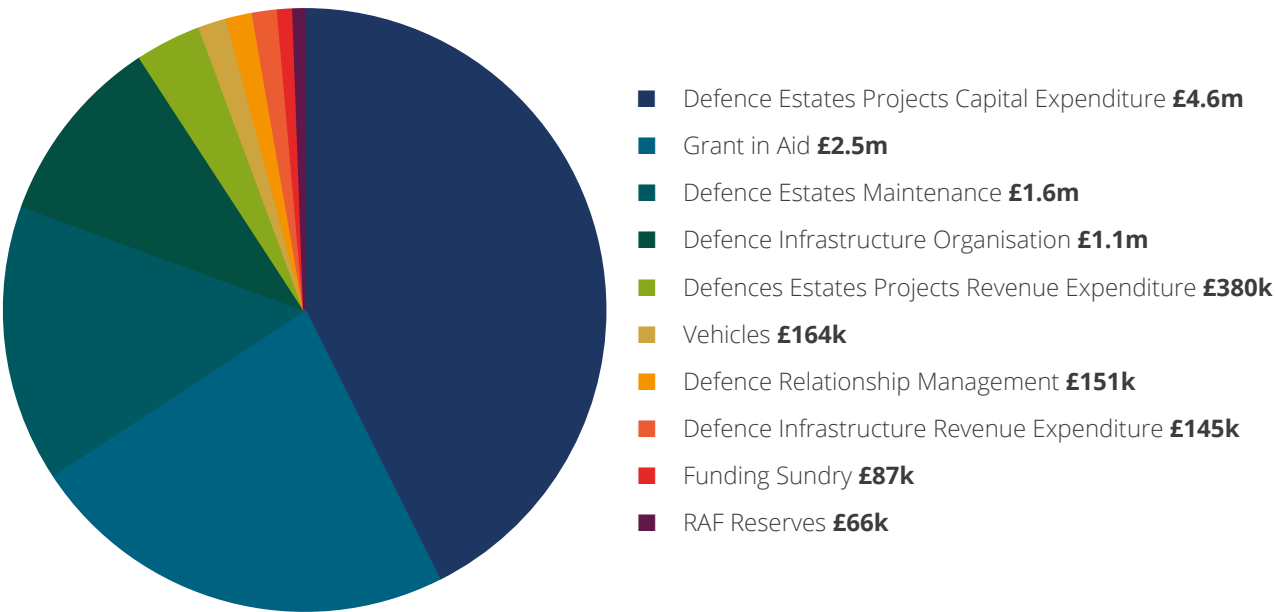
Reserve and Cadet support expenditure is down compared to previous years due to COVID-19, resulting in annual camps, parades and activities being cancelled in keeping with Government guidelines.

We continue to generate an income from the commercial exploitation of our estate through Alternative Venues and this is an area of the business we intend to build. The hiring of Army Reserve Centres and Cadet Centres raised an income of £140k this year as we continued to hire out the estate only to the emergency services and NHS Blood to help support these services through the pandemic.

East Midlands RFCA secured a further £235k in non-domestic rates (NDR) rebates from local authorities.

Electricity feed in Tariffs produced £8.5k of income. The money raised has funded various estates projects approved by our Finance Scrutiny Committee and our Board; it will also be used to assist Reserves and Cadets undertake adventurous training and help improve their facilities.

Funding Received 2020/21



Communications overview

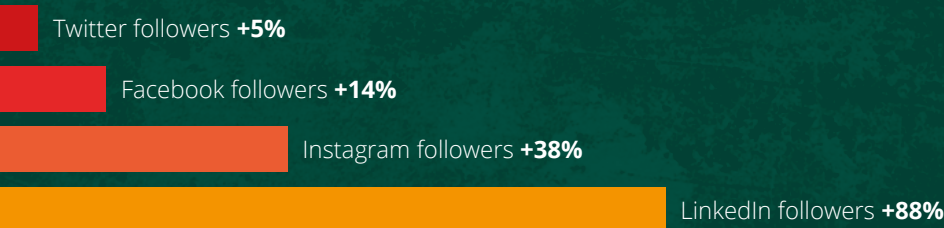
The impact of Covid on the Communications function this year was significant. With fewer activities and events, we had to work harder to help maintain public awareness, and ensure that internal communications helped staff remain informed and connected. In many cases, events became 'virtual', and we had to quickly adapt and learn new skills, in order to create dynamic and engaging content.



- Reserves Day became part of a larger Armed Forces Week (AFW), with each day representing a different aspect of Defence.
- Chief Exec appeared on East Midlands Today. Produced 4 video interviews with Reservists. Produced 7 articles for the website, covering Reserves, Cadets and Employer Engagement. Twitter impressions across the week totalled 15k. The Engagement rate on LinkedIn was over 9.5%.
- The Employer Recognition Scheme Awards also had to be celebrated virtually. In lieu of being able to host an event to congratulate our winners, we put together a
- publicity campaign to ensure their achievements were highlighted. This began with a video of congratulations from our Chairman, Colonel Nick Hile, the Chairman of our Regional Employer Engagement Group, Professor Dean Fathers, and Colonel Adam Fraser-Hitchen, the then Deputy Commander of 7th Infantry Brigade.
- Silver campaign: 3 quote montage videos. In-depth video interview with Pall-Ex. Education sector case study
- Gold campaign: 2 quote montage videos. In-depth video interviews with Nottingham Forest Community Trust and Bridgeway Consulting. 6 x employers produced video clips.
- Remembrance – we marked Remembrance by filming a laying of wreaths ceremony led by Mickleover Royal British Legion and transmitted it as a captioned video to social media and to their congregation. We also filmed socially distanced interviews with Reservists about what Remembrance means to them.
- Website – updated in line with new Accessibility Regulations for Public Sector Bodies. We had over 30k users on our website during the year, over 37k sessions, and 63k page views.
- Our monthly newsletter continues to prove popular, with an above average open rate and click through.

Social Media Statistics

- Our follower numbers continue to grow through organic means, as we do not run any paid-for promotions. The largest growth reflects those areas in particular where we have put more focus this year:
- In total in the year across the four social media platforms, we posted 1424 posts, resulting in 491k reach ie the total number of people who have seen our posts. Increased use of video certainly helped boost engagement during the year.



The year ahead

As the Chairman comments earlier, this has been an interesting year and trying to predict what the forthcoming 12 months will mean for the RFCAs is, to say the least, tricky. However, I would like to update you on progress with a number of Reviews that will influence the way we all work in the future.

Two Reviews, one complete and one in process, will have a direct effect on the RFCAs as a whole. The Sullivan Report's recommendations were accepted by the Secretary of State early last year and a Joint MOD/ RFCAs Implementation team was to take them forward; that implementation has been delayed by the MOD's necessary focus on Covid. The first phase of the RFCAs Estates Review was presented to Ministers in March and the MOD team is currently awaiting further direction.

Both of these reviews will of course sit within a context provided by 2 further reviews: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, published on 17 March, which describes the government's vision for the UK's role in the world over the next decade and the Reserves 30 paper. The former is a broad strategic document that the single Services will use as a framework for their own specific plans. Closer to home the latter describes possible revised structures and utility for the UK's Reserves in the future.

Returning to the first of all these papers, the Sullivan Review. In essence the paper noted that the RFCAs were doing what they should be doing and doing it well; it specifically commented on the centrality of our volunteer members to achieving that success. However, the paper also stated that the current structure of the RFCAs (13 independent bodies with a central coordinating Council of RFCAs

(CRFCA)) did not meet current government strictures for publically funded bodies. It determined that to do so the 13 RFCAs and CRFCA should become a single body, with the CRFCA becoming the 'head-office' and the 13 RFCAs becoming divisions of that single body, by April 2023. The new body will be known as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB). Moreover, volunteers with executive authority within the new organisation will need to be approved by the Office for the Commissioner of Public Appointments (OCPA)¹. Within that context the intent is to form a unitary board for the NDPB, consisting of a number of OCPA approved Non-Executive Directors (NED) and executives from the senior management of the NDPB; a total of about 9 people. The board chairman will be a NED.

This will be a significant change for the volunteers who, under the current construct, can be asked to be a member of one of the 13 RFCAs boards. We are determined to construct an organisation that still gives the volunteer a voice. To that end our intent is that the membership of the current RFCAs will form an Advisory Council for each new Division and will elect an Advisory Committee similar to the current regional RFCAs boards. In turn the Regional Advisory Councils will elect members to a National Advisory Council (NAC). This NAC will be enshrined in primary legislation (so it can only be dissolved by further legislation) and we intend it to be independent of the Board. In practice we believe that this will enable our

volunteer members to maintain an active role in the organisation while we retain the important principle of providing independent advice. Equally importantly the Lieutenancy will be invited to retain its current key role.

The MOD's focus on Covid has meant that they have been unable to bring their side of a joint implementation team together, so we have yet to test many of our proposals against their corporate view. The MOD team was finally convened in May of this year and work has commenced to agree our new structures.

The intent is that the new NDPB will achieve an initial capability in April 2022, with full capability by April 2023. A challenging deadline.

Estates review

The RFCAs Estates review reported in January and the team is currently awaiting ministerial direction on their recommendations. The intent of the review is to provide a better resourced estate for Reserves and Cadets. In a world of spending cuts and multiple strains on government finances that logically means a smaller estate. However, the 'Purple' review team contained Reserves and Regulars; it consulted widely with RFCAs, the single Services and Cadet staff. The team were conscious of the unique time demands placed on both Reserves and Cadets: most Reservists parade after a full day at work and a significant increase in travel time could affect retention; moreover, a significant number of Cadets rely on the parental taxi to get them to their detachments. A parent who spends a significant amount of time driving their child to and from Cadets (like the Reservist after a day at work) may not be inclined to continue that support if the transit time increases substantially. Indeed the Review team has acknowledged that very particular Cadet travel issue.

The simple fact remains though that the most effective way of improving the facilities available to both Reserves and Cadets is

to make better use of the existing facilities and to reduce the size of the estate where possible. Most RFCAs have Cadet facilities that are within a few miles of another site; these are often ACF and RAFAC detachments. If the facilities are currently only used for one or 2 nights a week it makes sense to try and co-locate the Cadets – as long as it does not prevent Cadets attending. Each of the RFCAs will progress in the next few months to identify a limited number of quick wins, which can be undertaken fairly quickly and are not contentious. The majority of the changes though will occur over several years and all will be thoroughly investigated before any action is taken, to ensure that no self-harm occurs.

Of course the Integrated Review, any single Service plans that flow from it and the Reserves 30 study could all affect plans linked to both Sullivan implementation and any future work on the RFCAs estate. The next year is likely to be a fluid one, whatever Covid throws at us and I look forward to working with you all to continue the RFCAs critical support to Reserves and Cadets.

**Gp Capt (Rtd)
Nick D Sharpe**
Chief Executive



1. See <https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/regulating-appointments/> for more details.

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Join the conversation

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Do you have a story you'd like to share?

Share your story and help to raise awareness
of Reserves and Cadets in the East Midlands
email em-comms@rfca.mod.uk