**VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

28th September 2023, 15:00 to 16:30

**ATTENDEES**

1. Office for Veterans’ Affairs and Ministry of Defence Officials
2. VAB Members: Susanna Hamilton, James Phillips, Danny Kinahan, Sir Nick Pope KCB CBE, Prof Beverley Bergman OBE, Louisa Clarke, Lee Buss-Blair, David Fothergill

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| **ITEM** | **MINUTES**  |
| 1 | **Office for Veterans’ Affairs (OVA) update**The Interim Office for Veterans’ Affairs Director provided an update on recent OVA activity, including:* Medals for the Nuclear Test Veterans are in production and are being distributed. A thank you to MoD and the Medal Office for all their work.
* As part of the Veterans Capital Housing fund, development grants and minor refurbishment grants are now open for applications via the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.
* The Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 will now be implemented.
* Veteran Employers’ Group are working on a guide aimed at employers of veterans, with a proposed launch at the end of October.
* Since the last VAB the LGBT Veterans Independent Review led by Lord Etherton and the Independent Review into UK Government Veteran Welfare Services for Veterans have reported; the government looking to respond in the late autumn.
* The OVA recently published its latest 6 monthly report on delivery against the Veteran Strategy Action Plan.
* Significant progress had been made on the production of Veterans ID Cards.

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| 2 | **Women’s Veterans’ Strategy**Officials provided an update on the progress, including: * Following the announcement to publish the government's first women veterans’ strategy, it is now in the development stage with intent to publish in 2024.
* The purpose of the strategy is to understand and recognise the experience of women veterans, to understand what support is available and to identify how we can better champion them.
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| 3 | **Veterans Consultation**Officials provided an overview and plans of the Veterans Consultation, including* The consultation will look across all areas of veterans policy.
* The consultation will seek evidence on a broad range of areas of the veteran experience and will consider the 6 key themes and 5 cross-cutting factors outlined in the Strategy for our Veterans.
* Provisional plans are to launch consultation towards the end of October.
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| 4 | **Update from the Scottish Veterans’ Commissioner** Susie Hamilton, the Scottish Veterans’ Commissioner, provided an update on her work, including: * Publication of the Scottish Veterans Commissioners annual assessment of the Scottish Government progress in improving support and services for Scotland’s veterans and their families.
* An update on the Skills Discovery Tool and the launch of RecruitVeterans.scot.
* Full details of the assessment can be viewed on the Scottish Veterans Commissioner website.
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| 5 | **Any other business** There was no other business.Next Meeting: 30th November 2023. |