



**NW RFCA**

RESERVE FORCES' AND CADETS' ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE NORTH WEST OF ENGLAND AND THE ISLE OF MAN

**AGM** 2025



**Chair's Report**





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# Introduction



**Brigadier (Retired) Tom O'Brien CBE TD VR DL**

## **Transformative Times, Transformational Year.**

In my report for 2024 the theme was 'Change is upon us'. This year, the central theme is driven by global politics and economics, 'Transformation has started' and will drive change in Defence and the Reserve Forces & Cadets Association for the North West of England and the Isle of Man.

As an enduring organisation for good, mirroring the very essence of Haldane's early vision, NW RFCA has been a stabilising and enduring influence throughout this year, across the North West of England and The Isle of Man, against the backdrop of a chaotic and unstable world.

During this time, War in Europe between Ukraine and Russia has entered its fourth year, including; the mobilisation of North Korean troops on European soil for the first time; A new US Administration with a sitting US President who has seriously challenged and obfuscated the existing norms of European and UK Defence doctrine; A Middle East landscape projecting even greater volatility and fragility since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948; Whilst here in the UK, critical national infrastructure resilience has come under increased scrutiny due to under investment and is continuously probed and targeted by our adversaries.

## **Strategic Defence Review (SDR)**

All eyes of the NW RFCA were keenly awaiting publication of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR), which was published earlier this month and which you can read in full on the NW RFCA website. Our new Government, specifically Secretary of State for Defence, Rt. Hon John Healey MP and Minister for Veterans and People, Alistair Carns MP (formerly Royal Marines) are highly respected individuals, friendly forces and working fastidiously to unlock innovation, technology and budgets that will support our Armed Forces and we now look forward to the 2026 Armed Forces Bill. The Chancellor's Spring Statement providing an additional £2.2bn for MoD as a further down payment on plans to deliver 2.5% GDP by 2027 is both encouraging and welcome.

Whilst SDR may not have all the answers for our National Security today, it is already providing the transformational levers, setting the tone and conditions for NW RFCA to review its working practices and the delivery of outputs; strengthening effectiveness and collaboration in our partnerships; and exploiting capability through the deep ties and broad coverage of influence in a regional landscape. As thinking and discussion evolves around the RFCA's ability to support any future mass mobilisation, the NW RFCA hope SDR will deliver a simplified and more agile proposition and on-boarding experience for our Reservists, reducing the 13 or so TACOS that exist today, modernising the current 'one glove fits all' approach to medical fitness standards and attract additional funding by way of RSD's.

## **Headquarters North (HQ N)**

On 1st August 2024, Headquarters North West (HQNW) moved Headquarters from Fulwood Barracks, Preston to become Headquarters North (HQN) Boulton Barracks, Catterick Garrison. In supporting the Commander HQ N, Colonel Peter Stitt (late RRF) through the 'crawl, walk, run' phases, NW RFCA has worked hard and succeeded in strengthening collaborative and effective working relationships with the new HQ across all outputs, despite geographical challenges and distances.

With three RFCA's supporting HQ N (NW RFCA, NE RFCA and Y&H RFCA) there are both opportunities and challenges to speak with one voice and deliver a consistency of service whilst acknowledging the regional differences that exist.

# Introduction

## NW RFCA Outputs

Our three core pillars have all risen to the challenge of this new partnership with great aplomb - and you can read more about their success later in the report. However, I do wish to single out an emerging fourth pillar within NW RFCA which deserves recognition.

Alternative Venues North West, under the leadership of NW RFCA Head of Commercial Operations, Alternative Venues (AV) Regionally Generated Income (RGI) has grown year on year for the past three years and continues to provide vital funds in a financial landscape in which budgets have shrunk. Working in partnership with the Commanding Officers and their Units, and signposting commercial opportunities towards the Volunteer Estate (VE), RGI has provided essential betterment funding enhancing the Lived Experience of Reservists, Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and Cadets through each of our core outputs. Examples include financial support to HQ N Royal Gun Salutes for Cadet and UK Blue Light Services; Subsidised 'tuck' during Summer Camp 24 for all cadets, on every day, and priority funding to fix and repair elements of the Volunteer Estate (VE).

Much has been written and documented about the VE since the last AGM, specifically the transfer of the maintenance and repair contract away from NW RFCA to VIVO Defence Services (a Joint Venture between SERCO and EQUANS) on 1 Aug 2024. At the time of writing, there are grave concerns by the Board and Executive of NW RFCA in the ability of the VIVO contract to support the needs and nuances of the VE. Through our broad and multiple channels of influence, HQ N, RC and CRFCA, NW RFCA continue to provide hard data that will reset the performance of the contract and contractors, whilst assuring and managing a VE that supports and enables vital operational outputs of all our customers. In the meantime, Head of Estates NW RFCA and his team, continue to track contract performance whilst identifying and conducting 'tactical' repairs through use of AV RGI.





# Introduction



## People

NW RFCA leadership has also experienced a period of transformation both at Board level and within the Executive.

After two years as President NW RFCA, Mark Blundell CVO His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside will hand over the baton as President to Lady Redmond MBE, His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire. I wish to thank Mark for his time as President and for his enthusiasm and interest he has shown in supporting Defence and the Cadet movement. I look forward to working with our new President.

Finally, after twelve years at the helm of NW RFCA as Chief Executive, Col (Retired) Mark Underhill OBEDL has retired, which has added an additional dimension to imbue the transformation journey of the NW RFCA. I wish to thank Mark, on behalf of the President, the Board and all our staff for his leadership and development of the NW RFCA throughout his tenure. For me, the legacy he leaves is that of an organisation well positioned to capitalise on the opportunities that lay ahead. Closer to home, no more fitting example of this is the excellent facility that is today Altcar Training Camp, and Alt House specifically. Mark's vision and logistical background were invaluable during the resale and relocation of NW RFCA from Alexander Court, in Liverpool to the design and development of the modern Headquarters at Alt House today which projects reach, influence and environmental standards for new build Reserve Centres of the future. We wish him and Debbie a long and healthy retirement.

I welcome Chance Wilson DL, Mark's successor into the post of Chief Executive and Lt-Col (Retired) Andy Downey, the new Deputy Chief Executive. A smooth transition at the helm has put them in an excellent place, and both have already made their mark. I am confident the NW RFCA is in good hands, and they will continue to exploit opportunities in the years ahead and demonstrate NW RFCA's relevance and resilience in these transformative times.



## Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to thank our President, Vice-President's, Board Members, Volunteers, salaried staff, and yourselves for your continued support to the Association throughout

2024 and into 2025. I, and the staff of NW RFCA, remain amazed at the number of days and hours that members of the Association continue to provide in support of the Associations work- much of it unnoticed. To the permanent staff - I thank you for your dedication and hard work. The support by the wider membership is much appreciated and it makes our work that much easier knowing that we have a hugely supportive group of Volunteers who we can rely on to further the Association's aims and outputs to create the best possible environment for our constituents: the Reservist and Cadets.

**I do hope you enjoy the report**





# Introduction



**HM Lord-Lieutenant  
of Merseyside -  
Mark Blundell CVO  
President NW RFCA**

My time as your President draws to an end in 2025, as I leave both my role as the Lord-Lieutenant of Merseyside and the Association after 8 years as your Vice-President and recently President.

I note the Chair's Introduction to this report and as in previous years, I remain in awe at the "change" programmes still on the agenda for the RFCAs but also their stabilising and enduring presence, specifically the NW RFCA, here in this region. At a time when there is much volatility and fragility around the world, and on our doorstep in Europe and with still more change to come as a result of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR), my hope and aspiration is that all these plans are sensibly funded to ensure our great Nation is both secure and prosperous in the years to come. NW RFCA has a very significant role to play today and with increasing financial pressure on all of the pillars, it can only strengthen its relevance and resilience to meet all of its "asks" in the future if it is well funded.

The Chair's Report for AGM 2025, has brought you up to speed with a short snapshot into the scope and variety of work undertaken by the salaried staff and the volunteer membership in support of the wider Reserve and Cadet community across the North West of England and the Isle of Man. What has impressed me in my time as President and Vice President most of all, is the extraordinary length our volunteers go to, whether Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAV's), Civilian Instructors (CI's) or other volunteers, they all have one thing in common. There is an abundance of selfless dedication and willingness to provide very best and highest levels of excellence to support a Lived Experience. This is both commendable and humbling. To recognise so many individuals through the Lord Lieutenants Awards (a record number of submissions in 2025 I believe), is both fitting and a wonderful example to society.

There is no doubt that there are challenges ahead: The statistics suggest the numbers of cadets across all groups are on the increase but for the hugely valued CFAV's, numbers are actually on the decline, as it is with our Reservists. The Chair has highlighted the hopes of NW RFCA in respect of SDR to which I also add my own voice. In addition, we must not overburden our CFAV's and Reservists with more administration, as this not only risks activities being stymied but also degrades the morale and good intent behind conceptual plans becoming reality. In turn, too often the resulting barriers and obstacles present such a high bar for planning, driven by a desire to attempt to de-risk everything, that events and activities remain in the conceptual phase. This has a direct impact on individual retention, and as a note of caution, there are plenty of other opportunities 'outside' for our talented and committed Volunteers and Reservists.

One other point I wish to highlight, acknowledging the Chair's comments in his foreword about the Transformative Times we live in, is the vital role of the NW RFCA as an enduring and stabilising influence through change. The NW RFCA has deep regional ties across the North West of England (and The Isle of Man) which is strategically important to retain moving forward. The influence, intelligence and ability to engage two ways, really connects society with Defence, so that not only Defence is understood but gives rise to the question what more can we do? [As a society, and as employers, businesses and communities]. The RFCAs, are 'The Golden Thread' connecting multiple agencies and stakeholders to deliver Defence's message; specifically NW RFCA, by the very nature of its physical geography, is best placed to assist Defence in any future mass mobilisation effort, drawing in local communities, employers, veterans - even the Lieutenancies to support Defence.





# Introduction

It is our people on the ground who understand the local and regional nuances and dynamics and we must never lose sight of this. Furthermore, this 'Golden Thread' must continue to be strengthened, in turn growing the current regional footprint and volunteer membership. Defence I counsel, should value, recognise and in turn exploit this influence and network through the RFCA's. I know that the incoming President and the Association Vice-Presidents will do all they can to ensure that the expertise of the membership will be retained and nurtured.

So, as my tenure draws imminently to a close, I look back on my time with fond memories. My involvement with NW RFCA goes back 8 years and I have enjoyed my time immensely. The role of Vice-President and now President has been extremely satisfying and I hope useful. I feel very privileged and fortunate to have been in a position to support the excellent youth organisation that is the Cadets with their dedicated Adult Volunteers: the real stars who are changing lives, but also our committed Reservists, both in Merseyside and more widely across the North West.

I firmly believe, despite the 'Transformative Times' we are facing, both externally and internally driven, that overall, the Association is in a healthy state thanks to everyone's efforts. As I prepare to handover the baton to my Vice Chair, Lady Redmond MBE I trust and hope she will enjoy her Presidency as much as I have, if not more. This year, I sat with the NW RFCA Board for the first time. As your President, I can honestly say the Chair, Board and Employees of NW RFCA do quite outstanding work behind the scenes and have a true passion and desire to want to make a difference. This, I always suspected was the case, but the granularity and planning was really brought home to me in that single afternoon. My view is that we cannot thank them enough and their vital work enriches the Lived Experience of so many of our talented and dedicated Reservists, CFAV's and Cadets.

Finally, I too wish to thank the outgoing Chief Executive, Mark Underhill and recognise the supreme effort, dedication and commitment he has made during his twelve years at the helm. This has had a superb and positive impact upon staff at NW RFCA but beyond with the customer-base too. I am very grateful to him for his personal support to me, I count him as a true friend and look forward to him spending even more time with me as a trusted DL in Merseyside! On a serious note, I wish him and his wife Debbie, a long and healthy retirement.

**All the very best for the coming year; thank you for your support.**





# Cadets & Youth











## Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Andy Downey - Deputy Chief Executive

I am honoured to head up Cadets & Youth at NW RFCA and contribute to the vital work of supporting our Reserve Forces, Cadets and the wider Armed Forces community.

Cadets. "Every child deserves to succeed, and we want to ensure that they are prepared for the opportunities and challenges of adult life" - Alistair Carns DSO OBE MC MP

## The size of the North West Cadet Forces

	<b>Sea Cadet Corps</b> 1,690 Cadets 995 Adult Volunteers	
	<b>Army Cadet Force</b> 3,827 Cadets 860 Adult Volunteers	
	<b>Air Training Corps</b> 4,042 Cadets 995 Adult Volunteers	
	<b>Combined Cadet Force</b> 3,830 Cadets 215 Adult Volunteers	
<b>Total: 13,389 Cadets and 2,965 CFAV's</b>		



## Introduction

Cadet Forces growth has been a headline topic this year. The Minister for Veterans and People Alistair Carns MP has championed the cadet movement and challenged us to think how can growth of the cadet forces not only be sustained but strengthened. The 2021 and 2025 reports produced by the University of Northampton have clearly demonstrated the societal and economic benefit of the Cadet Forces. It is an excellent example of the Ministry of Defence's corporate social responsibility, having a direct and positive impact on society, enhancing employability of both cadets and CFAV's.

The following statistics highlight four key impacts:

- KS1: Not being NEET (not in employment, education or training)**  
 If every year the cadet experience helps just 1% of cadets change their life outcomes so that they are in employment, education or training, the annual cost of the Cadet Forces is covered.
- KS2: Wellbeing**  
 In terms of health and wellbeing alone, participation in the Cadet Forces produces an annual return on investment in the region of £120 million each year.
- KS3: Cadet qualifications**  
 Each year it is estimated that the lifetime value of vocational qualifications gained by the most disadvantaged cadets is well over £130 million.
- KS4: Cadet Force Adult Volunteers qualifications**  
 Adult volunteers benefit from being in the Cadet Forces and can gain qualifications that can generate a total increase in potential lifetime earnings of around £50 million.



# Cadets & Youth



## Sea Cadets Corps

***“Every time I have visited TS Warspite, I feel an overwhelming sense of pride that its members have for the unit. This is the second time I have visited a presentation evening, and it is clear how valued the unit is in the community and the common understanding that the core values being introduced to these young cadets will set them up for their future.”***

Extensive work with Armed Forces Covenant signatories over the past 18 months has resulted in the engagement of over sixty organisations. With a newly appointed engagement officer, Lieutenant Commander (SCC) Carol Hankey has transformed interactions and outcomes through a newly designed customer management data base. For example, once information has been processed, a flyer will be circulated to the organisation to maintain links and information with the Area, District or Unit, ensuring dynamic communication and engagement.



## Army Cadet Force

Headquarters North was formed on 1 August 2024, which combined the old North East and North West RPOCs, now consisting of 22 Regular, 56 Reserve and 149 Cadet Units, and with a population of 15.5 million. The new Commander, Colonel Peter Stitt, late RRF has been a frequent and welcome visitor to NW cadets which comprise of 15,000 Cadets across the whole northern region.

Due to reduced availability on the Defence Training Estate (DTE), Cadet Training Teams (CTTs) are consolidating training capability by establishing fewer (6) central camp locations and reducing time at camp to 7 days. ACF counties have positively engaged with the revised Annual Camp programme, with North West Commandants and NW RFCA PSS working diligently and collaboratively to manage this significant change and to set conditions for success. Barry Buddon in Scotland will be the location for all 5 counties Annual Camp this summer.





# Cadets & Youth

## Air Training Corps

Recruitment efforts have remained steady, with a notable 10% increase in progression into uniformed roles. This positive trend reflects the dedication of the ATC recruitment team and the appeal of STEM programmes to prospective cadets and adult volunteers.

Over the past year cyber-related training sessions to equip cadets with essential digital skills has proved to be popular. In addition, leadership courses (delivering leadership training to foster effective team management and decision-making skills) and sports competitions (swimming, football, hockey, athletics, cross country and netball) have also been key activities and ensured a fun and varied syllabus.



## Next Steps

Continuing with the theme of collaboration, I commend a Joint Tri- Service E-sports activity taking place at Altcar on Sat 27 Sep 25. Thanks to the RAFAC E-sports lead and his team who will deliver the event, cadets from all services will participate in a joint cadet experience. The future remains positive across all cadets and I never fail to be inspired when visiting and seeing both cadets and adult volunteers in action.

**I end by thanking all Adult Volunteers for your service. Thank you.**



**Every child deserves to succeed**



# Cadets & Youth

## Cadet Expansion Programme

The current era of the joint DfE/MOD Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP) is termed Phase 3+ which continues to focus on the sustainment of units and growth in cadet numbers. The North West has 49 CCF Contingents across the region (breakdown of sS attached).

SCEOs continued to work under their new change in title from “Expansion” to “Engagement” officers as they work to a new updated directive and reflect, in name, the aspiration of sustainment and growth in cadet numbers.

There have been two Contingent closures in the last 12 months, but there have also been new Contingents approved as part of Phase 3, “business as usual”. There are 2 schools currently engaged by the single services with the plan of further Contingents being approved in the very near future.



CURRENT NUMBERS	
Pre CEP	16 Contingents
CEP Units Opened (not including unit closures)	
CEP 100 (2012-2015)	4
May 16	4
November 16	2
May 17	5
November 17	3
May 18	7
November 18	5
CEP Phase 3 (“Business as Usual”)	9
CEP Breakdown by Service	
Army	21 (+3)
Royal Navy	5
Royal Marine	2
Royal Air Force	7 (-1)
CCF Contingents by County	
Lancashire	10
Greater Manchester	13 (-1)
Cheshire	9
Merseyside	13 (+2)
Cumbria	3 (+1)
Isle of Man	1



# Defence Relationship Management - Employer Engagement

Extending NW RFCA 'influence and reach' (Armed Forces Covenant signatories April 2025)

Support to the Armed Forces in the North West remains buoyant, with the continued growth in Armed Forces Covenant signatories, with another 111 AFCs being signed since April 2024. The majority of these signatories then proceed with the Employer Recognition Scheme Ladder of Support and move towards Bronze, Silver and Gold levels of support to Defence in the region. It is especially pleasing to see that the North West continues to deliver support to 10% of the total number of Armed Forces Covenants signed across the UK, which in turn means Reserve and Cadet Forces are well supported within the communities in which they live and work.

## North West Armed Forces Covenants

1272



## National Armed Forces Covenant numbers, 12,856

National ERS Gold Awards - 1010  
National ERS Silver Awards - 1,393  
National ERS Bronze Awards - 5,576

## Dates of Employer Recognition Scheme Awards 2025

14 July 2025

ERS Silver Awards - Knowsley Hall, Merseyside

22 September 2025

ERS Gold Awards - Blackburn Cathedral



# Defence Relationship Management - Employer Engagement

## Defence Relationship Management Employer Engagement Review 2025 (DRM EE review)

On the 10th anniversary of the DRM programme, the Defence Relationship Management EE Review was both timely, (managing 12,000 accounts within current resources and finances was becoming ever more challenging) and more generally, an opportunity to review the current DRM operating model and outputs. The EE Review considered all elements of account management, award delivery, operating costs, resources and resourcing.

On 1 April 2025 the New Operating Model was implemented. Armed Forces Covenant accounts are now placed into one of three categories - **Managed**, **Engaged** and **Informed**.

A short definition of each category is below:

- a. **Managed** accounts receive the most attention as they will be the Defence prioritised account cohort. The number of accounts Defence seek to have in this cohort will need to be very closely governed so as to maintain the sustainability of the model.
- b. **Engaged** accounts will primarily be progressing through the AFC & ERS journey on a normal trajectory with automation maximised to process heavy parts of that journey.
- c. **Informed**. These are all remaining Accounts not profiled as being in either the Managed or Engaged profile.

The above categories are mainly driven by the Defence Demand Signal (Jan - Jul 25), where Defence wishes to foster and grow Defence Capability in the following industry sectors:

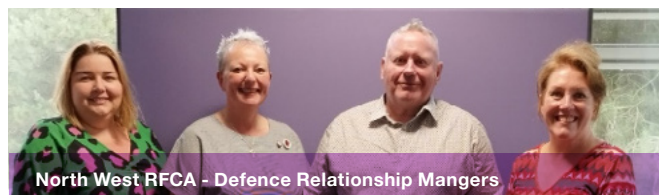
- a. **Engineering**
- b. **Manufacturing, Technology (STEM, IT) Defence.**
- c. **Transport and Logistics**
- d. **Medical**
- e. **Space**
- f. **Cyber & Digital Capabilities**
- g. **Drone Tech**
- h. **Program managers**

## People Update

In July 2024 the team welcomed Mrs Kerryanne Wilde into the post of Regional Employer Engagement Director. Kerryanne has experience of the third sector and working with local charities in Cumbria, and looks after business accounts in Cumbria and Lancashire. Kerryanne has a military background having served in the Intelligence Corps and is an avid supporter of veterans.

Interviews were held in March 2025 to appoint a replacement for Sue Thomson, who left us in February 2020. We are delighted to have appointed Mrs Lisa Ambrose, who comes to us from working in a local school. Lisa is from a Service family, her husband served in the Royal Air Force. Lisa will start with the team in May 2025.

**Change of Job Titles from 'National Account Managers' (NAM) & 'Regional Employer Engagement Directors' (REED) to 'Defence Relationship Managers' (DRMs).**



In consultation with employees, job titles will no longer include 'National' or 'Regional' as the previously titled NAMs will no longer exclusively handle larger, multi-regional accounts, and similarly REEDs will not solely oversee regional accounts. Instead, Defence Relationship Managers (DRMs) are to be considered as a single entity within DRM as an organisation, sharing the same responsibilities across all types of accounts, performing the same EE duties under the Operating Model, which shifts focus to Defence priorities.

Having this unified job title offers significant advantages. It enhances the DRM brand, ensures clarity for stakeholders (employers and Defence colleagues alike) eliminating any potential confusion or ambiguity. Linking the role title to the organisation's name creates a natural synergy with DRM now a recognised brand in its own right. From 01 April the North West Regional Employer Engagement Directors were retitled Defence Relationship Managers (DRM).



# Defence Relationship Management - Employer Engagement

## Lord - Lieutenants and Lieutenant Governor's Awards 2025

This has been another record breaking year where we have received 217 Lord - Lieutenant and Lieutenant Governor Award submissions from units, service charities and individuals. We are delighted with the continued growth of the awards as they recognise and reward individuals and teams for their exceptional service and valued contribution to their local community and society as a whole.

### Dates of Lord - Lieutenant and Lieutenant Governors Awards 2025

**20 May 2025**

LL Cumbria Awards -  
Barrow Town Hall

**09 June 2025**

LL Lancs Awards -  
Blackburn Cathedral

**16 July 2025**

LL Gtr Manchester Awards -  
Gorton Monastery

**15 September 2025**

LL Merseyside Awards -  
Anglican Cathedral, Liverpool

**02 October 2025**

IOM LG Awards

**18 November 2025**

LL Cheshire Awards -  
Chester Cathedral



Lord - Lieutenant and Lieutenant Governor Awards are a fabulous way to recognise exceptional service

## Looking ahead

The DRM New Operating Model provides the North West team with an opportunity to work ever closer with AFC supportive businesses to help foster greater support for Reserves, Cadets, Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and the wider Defence Community.

The work the NW RFCA Engagement team delivers through the Lord Lieutenants Awards, AFC and ERS Awards

continues to add huge value in the North West region, through the close links and ties with HM Lieutenancies, Businesses, Local Authorities, the Gold Award Association and Veteran's Groups.



**ARMED FORCES  
COVENANT**

# Altcar Training Camp

This year has been another very busy year for Altcar Training Camp which has seen the numbers of military visiting and staying in the camp reach a ten year high. Altcar ranges and training areas have been in high demand with over 1.4 million rounds fired by Regular, Reserve and Cadet units.

In June 2024 Altcar Training Camp said goodbye and thank you to their Commandant Gordon Black. Gordon had been the Commandant for over 11 years transforming Altcar Training Camp Estate with a new Field Supply Area, PODs veterans area and the construction of Dutch Barns. He also managed Altcar Training Camp during the COVID Pandemic and assisted Liverpool City during the terror attack in 2023. This has been an outstanding stewardship by Gordon and everyone would like to wish him, Val, and his family all the best for the future.

This resulted in a new Commandant being recruited and Carl Gardner joining the Altcar Training Camp Team after 37 years' regular service in the British Army. Carl was joined by his wife Evelyn who will support him in his new role.



The improvements by the Altcar Team continues and new vending areas have been installed at the Red Rose Club and Range side. This will improve the retail offer for the visiting Units and enhance their lived experience whilst onsite. Following approval of a £150,000 modernisation project, improvements nothing short of a full makeover have transformed the Altcar Gym resulting in a modern, fit for purpose and well-designed sports centre which exceeds military fitness requirements.

The Veterans Glamping PODs have finally received retrospective Planning Permission from Sefton Council. The PODs will now be brought onto Altcar Camp asset register through the Estates Team. The PODs area will then become operational and open for business in support of our Veterans General Well Being ensuring a vital service and sanctuary for those who have served the nation and whom we can give something back to.

The next year for Altcar will be a challenging one. The demand is as high as ever for Units planning to use the ranges and training areas. The HFM and SFM issues are still challenging as it is with much of the DTE but Altcar seems to be in better shape than most. Visitors should be reassured that Altcar Training Camp Staff will give a 100% to optimize both support and the lived experience in Altcar both safe and enjoyable.





# Infrastructure

## Estate Department Overview: 2024-2025

The introduction of the Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) on 1 August 2024 marked a transformative change in how the RFCA's manage infrastructure for the Volunteer Estate. For the first time in over 115 years, this shift brought VIVO Defence Services (VIVO) on board as the new prime contractor for our estate. While the potential for success was clear, the journey has been challenging, particularly during the initial stages of implementation.

## Challenges of Early Implementation

In the North West, VIVO, acknowledged significant shortcomings in their preparation up to and post ISD (1 Aug 2024). For example, their supply chain was not robust enough to meet the demands of managing an estate spread across 1,400 buildings in 240 locations. Insufficient investment in trained engineers and logistical challenges, such as the need to travel long distances to collect keys, compounded these issues. These difficulties impacted VIVO's ability to deliver the expected service levels, and there were, and remain, notable delays in addressing urgent maintenance and repairs.

Despite these setbacks NW RFCA are committed to working alongside VIVO to address these challenges. VIVO has invested in strengthening their supply chain and increasing staffing levels to better meet the demands of the estate. We remain optimistic that, with continued collaboration, these issues will be resolved in the months ahead.

## Changes in Roles and Responsibilities

The introduction of FDIS also required a shift in the responsibilities of the Estate Department. Traditionally a delivery agency for maintenance and inspections, our role has evolved to an assurance body overseeing VIVO's performance. This transition has required a reorganisation of our department and a focus on monitoring and assuring VIVO meets its contractual obligations.

## Addressing Budget and Infrastructure Challenges

The state of the estate itself remains a significant concern. Many of our buildings are ageing, and critical assets such as boiler systems and roofs are life-expired, requiring costly repairs. Unfortunately, the current budget allocation has not been sufficient to address these issues. This has left many stakeholders dissatisfied, as critical infrastructure continues to deteriorate.

We continue to engage with stakeholders to secure additional funding to address these urgent needs. In parallel, we are working with VIVO to resolve logistical challenges and improve response times for maintenance.

## Our Electric Vehicle Fleet

NW RFCA has further expanded its 10-strong electric vehicle fleet with the addition of two new electric cars, building on more than five years of operating electric and hybrid vehicles. These new vehicles, with a range of up to 375 miles, will be used by staff supporting our Reserve Forces and uniformed cadet organisations across the North West. Most of our journeys are around 50 miles, making them ideal for electric vehicle use. The vehicles are charged using electricity generated by the camp's on-site 1.1-megawatt solar farm, which meets 100% of daytime energy needs. By switching from petrol and diesel to solar-charged EVs, we estimate a direct annual saving of around £10,000 in fuel costs, alongside a substantial reduction in carbon emissions. This move supports our wider programme to decarbonise the Reserve and Cadet Estate, demonstrating our commitment to sustainability and delivering long-term benefits for both the environment and the communities we serve.



A flashback to receiving our first, fully-electric cars outside NW RFCA's Alt House HQ, itself a sustainably designed building.

# Infrastructure

## HMS Eaglet



The modern day HMS Eaglet; home to the Royal Navy Regional Headquarters, the Royal Marine Reserve, Naval Regional Command North and the Sea Cadet Corps is a resolute blend of tradition and modern-day functionality serving as both a major HQ and Training Establishment with the responsibility of training over 300 Reservists and Cadets annually in a wide range of maritime defence activities; meaning that having the right location, the right equipment and the right facilities are integral to its success.

Recognising the strategic importance of HMS Eaglet, the Royal Navy have gone to great lengths to ensure that Regular's, Reserves and Cadets receive the very best lived experience and have worked collaboratively with NW RFCA; through regular communication and investment, to maintain and improve the facilities such as the recent installation of a new CCTV and intercom system, the refurbishment of the female locker rooms and the installation of a new heating system which, alongside the implementation of FDIS has ensured that a sustained focus remains on the site's infrastructure, ensuring it remains fit for its vital training and operational roles and cementing HMS Eaglet as a reminder of Liverpool's deep naval roots and its historical connection to the Sea.



## Deployable Resilient Energy System

The Infrastructure Team are delighted to support one of our long standing partners, Task Contract Solutions innovative approach to Sustainability. In the spirit of partnership we have welcomed the installation of this innovative technology. The Deployable Resilient Energy System (DRES) is currently hard at work at Altcar, generating energy through solar and wind.

We are now in Phase II of this pilot with the DRES unit evolving over time, the DRES has the ability to provide the military with energy independence, operational flexibility and cost-efficiency, ensuring mission readiness which is sustainable, scalable and resilient in these uncertain times.

A great example of how the North West Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association is supporting clean energy and shaping our future.



## Looking Ahead: Optimism for the Future

Despite the challenges faced in the first year of FDIS, we remain cautiously optimistic. VIVO's ongoing investment in their supply chain and personnel, combined with our efforts to secure additional funding, will position the estate for long-term success. We are committed to ensuring that the infrastructure supporting our Reserves and Cadets is fit for purpose, and we are confident that, through collaboration and perseverance, we will overcome the current challenges and build a stronger, more resilient estate.



# Alternative Venues

## Overview

Alternative Venues has had another successful year with a slight increase in the overall income generated in 2024/25.

Unfortunately there was a decline in enquiries from TV/Filming productions, although BBC Drama This City is Ours did film scenes at Altcar Training Camp. Another long standing valued client Border Force, paused their training owing to a boiler failure at Wigan Army Reserve Centre. It is hoped this will be repaired soon and see them back training before too long.

One success story to highlight is the support provided to Transport for Greater Manchester storing over 70 new double decker buses in preparation for the roll out of their new fleet in January 2025.

## Financial

I am pleased to report the income generated by Alternative Venues in 2024/25 is £740,236.91 the breakdown is as follows: Hirings - £575,049.26, Mast - £134,261.00, Altcar Ranges - £30,926.65. This is a fantastic achievement by all involved in AV.

## Telecommunications Masts

There has been an increase in income for the masts; this is due to backdated rent on a number of sites.

## Summary

I am extremely happy and proud of how AV has performed this year. The income generated is testament to the work of the AV department and importantly the support and working relationships with the teams at each of the sites. Thank you.



# Finance

The Association began the financial year 24/25 with a budget allocation of £8.5M. In addition to this the Association had receipts in advance of £737K to fund various projects.

The budget increased by £2.75M during the year to reflect new projects and priorities, the funding available for the year totaled £11.7M (excluding RGI). In year allocations included £427K for safe & legal works, £278k on vehicles, £1.1M for capital projects, £916K for revenue projects and £6K for additional Injured Service Personnel adaptations. The Receipts In Advance carried forward into FY 25/26 amount to £175.6K.

On 1st August most of the Hard FM services i.e. statutory mandatory test, inspections and works, reactive maintenance and planned ground maintenance previously carried out in house with contractors approved by the association were transferred to Vivo under the FDIS contract. You will see there has been a significant drop in both the income received and the expenditure incurred in Hard FM. Any remaining services that were carried out in house in this financial year will transfer to Vivo under the FDIS contract in the new financial year.

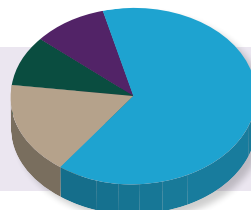
The Association's accounts represent income from 11 distinct funding streams. The consolidated accounts for FY 24/25 have been audited, the Association has received final confirmation of the audit, the Financial Return and Audit Findings report were signed off by the Chair and the Chief Executive on the 9th May 2025. The Balance Sheet and Income and Expenditure reports are included at page xx.

The pie charts below illustrate both the summary of income and how this has been allocated to our outputs with 20% earmarked for Estates Management and 32% allocated to infrastructure (primarily rents and rates).

In addition to the funding provided, NWRFCA has generated £831k of income. £575k was generated primarily through the work of the Alternative Venues (AV) team. The AV team have worked tirelessly to sustain the level of income. Examples of how the funding is used are outlined opposite:

**We generated £831k Income**

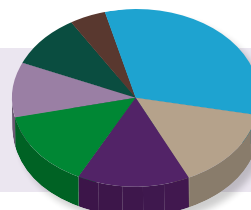
## Regionally Generated Income - Distribution



Refunds to units for use of facilities for hiring to 3rd parties	£254,302
Business Development and Alternative Venues costs	£67,455
Grants	£36,392
AV hiring costs	£37,810

Turning to our Trusts, they have been able to support units with grant contributions and in 2024/25 the value of grants awarded is shown below. The Trusts meet annually in November with a second round of reserve allocations in January, applications are welcome from all eligible units as shown in the eligibility chart on the associations website..

## Trust grants awarded in 2024/25



Stretford Road Trust	£12,750
Macclesfield Drill Hall Trust	£12,950
NW Army Cadet Force Trust Fund	£28,213
Congleton Drill Hall Trust	£12,250
Yorkshire Street Trust	£8,726
Sir Alan Jones	£8,489
Crosby Road	£4,160
<b>Total</b>	<b>£87,538</b>





## The North West of England and the Isle of Man Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Financial Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

### Income & Expenditure Account

	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
<b><u>Income</u></b>				
Funding via Council of RFCAs	11,660,267		14,436,791	
Funding received direct from funders	-		-	
Receipts generated by the RFCA	834,735		1,305,016	
<b>Total income</b>		12,495,002		15,741,807
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>				
<b>Estates Management</b>				
Statutory & Mandatory	357,663		1,164,325	
Planned Maintenance	112,018		96,657	
Reactive Maintenance	677,925		1,575,419	
Incidental Work	47,609		22,796	
Life Cycle Replacement	-		27,422	
Condition Grade Improvement	274,285		289,570	
Injections / Projects RDEL and MNW	955,819		740,396	
Works in Aid of Disposal	-		-	
Prof Fees / Ext Assistance	4,138		9,498	
<b>Sub total</b>		2,429,457		3,926,083
<b>Capital Expenditure</b>				
Land & Buildings	-		-	
Purchase of Vehicles	-		-	
Assets in the Course of Construction	1,149,080		2,841,633	
<b>Sub total</b>		1,149,080		2,841,633
<b>Staff Costs</b>				
LE NI Civ Staff Pay	2,807,612		2,707,259	
UK NI Civ ERNIC	290,937		282,408	
LE Civ Ind Staff Pay	456,856		415,153	
UK Ind Civ ERNIC	42,905		39,814	
Non PCSPS Pens Payments	376,770		336,376	
Redundancy Payments	-		-	
<b>Sub total</b>		3,975,080		3,781,010



## The North West of England and the Isle of Man Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Financial Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

### Income & Expenditure Account - continued

	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
<b>Infrastructure</b>				
Heating Oil	-		-	
Gas	-		1,118	
Electricity	522,136		653,083	
Water & Sewage	-		-	
Estate & FMS Accom Stores	272,395		310,355	
Energy Cons & Env Chge	330,418		308,925	
Rates / NDR	1,766,364		1,502,028	
Sub-Letting Costs	285,580		218,638	
Rents / Leases / Alarms / Lettings	382,365		460,192	
Sub total		3,559,258		3,454,339
<b>IT &amp; Comms</b>				
IT Minor Equipment HW / SW	50,516		21,607	
IT Maintenance Services & Contracts	3,548		11,691	
Line & Tel Rental	30,690		44,602	
Sub total		84,754		77,900
<b>Transport &amp; Movement</b>				
Lease of Vehicles	-		-	
Vehicle Maint	72,076		53,626	
Fuel (Non Utilities)	6,434		5,863	
Depreciation	146,615		237,279	
Loss on Sale of Vehicles	25,670		3,469	
Sub total		250,795		300,237
<b>Recruiting Support</b>				
Employer Support (DRM)	44,874		43,096	
Recruiting Support	(994)		4,981	
Sub total		43,880		48,077
<b>Grants</b>				
CRFCA Payment	-		-	
ACF Travel & Consolidated Grants	301,484		383,329	
Payments to Welfare Association	6,139		11,636	
TA Establishment & Band Grant	37,392		36,302	
FAuxAF Admin & PR	-		-	
Sub total		345,015		431,267



## The North West of England and the Isle of Man Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Financial Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 Income & Expenditure Account - continued

	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
<b>Administration</b>				
Office / General Administration	171,404		59,165	
Education / Training	5,921		6,671	
Professional Fees	10,821		10,500	
Legal Costs	2,770		4,420	
Insurance	4,958		4,792	
Travel & Subsistence	39,856		76,767	
Entertainment	-		-	
Sub total		235,730		162,315
<b>HR Support</b>				
HR & Recruiting - Civilian Assoc Staff	4,650		43,577	
Sub total		4,650		43,577
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		12,077,699		15,066,438
<b>Excess income for the year</b>		<u>417,303</u>		<u>675,369</u>





## The North West of England and the Isle of Man Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Financial Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

### Balance Sheet

	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
<b>Non Current Assets</b>				
Motor Vehicles	969,551		860,703	
		969,551		860,703
<b>Current Assets</b>				
Bank	3,865,059		3,336,415	
Petty Cash	600		600	
Sundry Debtors	138,379		1,143,754	
Prepayments & Accrued Income	174,810		162,309	
		4,178,848		4,643,078
<b>Current Liabilities</b>				
Sundry Creditors	209,389		465,051	
Accruals / Deferred Income	651,243		824,317	
Advance Receipts	394,166		736,965	
		1,254,798		2,026,333
<b>Total Assets Less Total Liabilities</b>		<u>3,893,601</u>		<u>3,477,448</u>
<b>Financed By</b>				
General Reserves	2,924,050		2,616,745	
Capital Reserves	969,551		860,703	
		<u>3,893,601</u>		<u>3,477,448</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 9th May 2025 and signed on its behalf by:

Chair

Chief Executive





✉ [nw-info@rfca.mod.uk](mailto:nw-info@rfca.mod.uk)

🌐 [nwrzca.org.uk](http://nwrzca.org.uk)

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# NW RFCA

RESERVE FORCES' AND CADETS' ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE NORTH WEST OF ENGLAND AND THE ISLE OF MAN



ARMED FORCES  
COVENANT