



Council of Military Education Committees of the Universities of the United Kingdom

Executive Committee Meeting

**held on Thursday 24th June 2021 from 1100hrs to 1415hrs at ULOTC, Yeomanry
House, Handel Street, London, WC1N 1NP and Microsoft Teams**

Minute

Present

Mr J S Castle (Chairman); Dr M Vilnay (Vice-Chair); Rev Professor J P Taylor (Treasurer); Mrs S Bedford; Ms C Kinlead; Professor P Ivey; Professor M Siva-Jothy; Maj I Stoney; Col N Cheshire; Col D Gray; Cdr N Downing RN; Lt Col M Bishop; Wg Cdr M Dewer

In Attendance

Mr Jason Norris (Secretary); Maj R O Wilson; Mr K Thompson

Apologies

General Sir P Wall (President); Dr R Hall; Mr A Smith; Dr J Smith; Gp Capt I Sharrocks

- NOTED: The Chairman thanked colleagues for joining both in person and online, and thanks were given to the Secretary for making the arrangements.

1. Minutes

- APPROVED: The Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 25th February 2021 (COMEC_Exec_2021_06_A1)

2. Matters Arising

- CONSIDERED: Any matters or action points arising (COMEC_Exec_2021_06_A2)

Chairman's Report (Min 3 25 Feb 2021)

- RESOLVED: The Chairman noted that small teams would be set up to discuss each action noted in his report with recommendations. The Executive would then agree on next steps.

- **ACTION: An initial working party including the Chairman, Vice-Chair and Secretary to be convened before November to start reviewing the COMEC Constitution.**
- **ACTION: The other noted actions in the Chairman's report will be taken forward through the current and upcoming COMEC Executive meetings through the agendas.**

Relations with the MECs (Min 7 25 Feb 2021)

- **ACTION: The Chairman requested the Executive share bullet points with the Secretary on MEC meetings so these can be collated.**
- Resolved: The Sussex MEC Chair noted that in Sussex, Brighton and Chichester there are students that want to join an OTC but there is no provision at this time. Would it be possible for the Army to consider an OTC in Brighton? Col N Cheshire will take forward.

Any Other Business (Min 8 25 Feb 2021)

- APPROVED: The Vice-Chair suggested MEC Chairs should be invited to one COMEC Executive meeting per year as observers. The Chairman agreed and noted commitment to have at least one COMEC Executive meeting virtually going forward, this may be an opportunity for MEC Chairs to attend. This is currently planned for the February COMEC Executive meeting.

3. Briefing on Army Engagement with Universities

- RECEIVED: A briefing by Major Rhys Wilson
- NOTED: Maj R O Wilson noted that the Army Engagement Group (AEG) is a team of officers and soliders focussed on ensuring society is connected to Army. The AEG do not take part in Army recruitment. In the Higher Education (HE) sector AEG want to better engage both with UOTCs and the wider HE community (providers and students). The AEG want to inform society about what Army are doing and educate youth about what the Army do. AEG also reassure society based on hot topics or specific groups or elements of society based on history or specific events.
- NOTED: The AEG are made up of several teams including the education team, business engagement team and diversity engagement team.
- NOTED: The AEG specifically want to focus on underrepresented groups including ethnic minorities, female and LGBGT+.
- NOTED: The Chairman fully supported the need for more involvement noting the significant value of the Army Engagement Group. The Chairman suggested a tri-service approach may provide a stronger more convincing message and asked if this could be considered. Professor P Ivey also added his support noting Universities are peculiar and it is important the approach and message are right for the HE audience right from the beginning. He suggested COMEC support these events with the Army and then incrementally build up with the RAF and RN. The Chairman noted that this was an activity that both COMEC and MECs can support at their own institutions.

- NOTED: The Treasurer and Ms C Kinhead noted the importance of getting the approach right in Northern Ireland and the need to get OCdt's involved as they best know their peers and can highlight the benefits of engagement with USU's.
- **ACTION: The Chairman requested Professor P Ivey, Ms C Kinhead and the Treasurer investigate HE engagement further with the Army Engagement Group once Maj R O Wilson's replacement is in post.**

4. Chairman's Report

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from the Chairman (COMEC_Exec_2021_06_B)

Chairman's Report

June 2021

Welcome back

It has been a while since we last met, face to face. This is a moment I have been waiting for. So welcome to this first step towards normality.

Unfortunately, this comes with a small caveat regards the wearing of masks. At the time of writing, it is unclear whether or not all restrictions will be lifted on the 21st June (few days before we meet). Whilst I suspect most of us will be fully vaccinated, my advice would be to pack a mask, just in case.

Political developments

Johnny Mercer MP, our intended key-note speaker, has been replaced by Leo Docherty as Veterans Minister. My intention was to retain Mr Mercer, but it seems his constituency diary is already full. I would like to offer our thanks to for all the work he did in post (and continues to do), in support of our Veterans.

I have approached Leo Docherty as his replacement. I await response from his office. I would like to offer him our congratulations on his appointment.

Whether or not we are able to secure the Minister; the primary focus of this session and subsequent workshop, will continue to be University support for Veterans, Armed Forces and Families. We have a Plan C.

Conference

I do not intend to steal thunder, so will leave this item in the good hands of our committee to report upon. I would like to offer my personal thanks for all their hard work so far.

5-Eyes - "Transition – Achieving a Life Well Lived"

I have become involved with an organisation that operates internationally with the aim of maximising the outcomes for Veterans and families. We (Aus, NZ, UK, USA & Can) meet regularly to compare practice within the "5-Eyes" University space. We are

looking to semi-formalise activity and at least create platforms where international practice might be shared. I have attached an information sheet, regards the organisation.

In light of COMEC's position in this space and our UK "reach", I am proposing to collaborate by promoting this international work via our platforms. This will be good for us, providing international profile.

We will discuss as an Agenda item, at the meeting.

Chairs "In Conversation" – (MECs & COMEC)

Thanks to Margi, Patton (and me) thus far for stepping up and chairing these meetings. We have had three to date and each one in its own way, has been fruitful. I have to acknowledge that the last meeting was not as "full" as it might have been. In some ways this might have been expected. We suspect the problem may lie in emails getting buried, so Jason has extended the reach to include the Secretaries.

The MECs are being encouraged to send proxies when the Chair cannot attend. This would be beneficial particularly to recent MEC members, who will be able to quickly learn what COMEC is about. There is no reason the MEC Chair cannot rotate attendance, so that eventually, all will be exposed.

I will ask Jason to schedule a roster for our input to future "Conversations", by Surname (alphabetical order). The meetings are scheduled for 18:00, usually on a Wednesday, couple of weeks pre-COMEC Exec meetings. The COMEC Exec rep chairs the meetings. I would urge your own free-style; no agenda; no formality. Primary aim is to promote open conversation.

MEC and other Invitations

A great initiative by our NI-MEC colleagues (thank you to Alistair Finlay) was the sending of invitations to all COMEC Exec to attend their Strategic Studies lecture. The lecture was on the 12th May with Professor Michael Clarke (Kings College, London and the Royal United Services Institute) posing the challenge and Rear Admiral Phil Hally, Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, People Transformation, and Naval Secretary setting out the RN response to that challenge.

From a tech perspective, they used the MS Teams Live platform which has a capacity for 10,000 simultaneous users. This is perhaps something we might explore in getting any message across to huge audiences.

For those that missed the SSL follow the link to a recording below:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_MDFhNGJjNTMtYjVkJZS00ZmIzLWJiNmUtNDYyYzdjN2UwYTNk%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22eaab77ea-b4a5-49e3-a1e8-d6dd23a1f286%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22be5331f2-1953-405c-b8a1-cf766d78def2%22%2c%22IsBroadcastMeeting%22%3a%22true%22%7d&btype=a&role=a

Another invitation received, was for attendance at a RFCA AGM, (coincidentally, also from NI). As you will know, the RFCAs play a crucial role in the operation of our

University Service Units. The NI-RFCA wanted to give me a platform to discuss future COMEC direction; an opportunity I could not refuse.

All for now. I look forward to seeing you in a few weeks.

Jim C

Chairman – COMEC (UK)

8th June, 2021

5. Internationalisation Opportunity for COMEC

- RECEIVED: A briefing from the Chairman (COMEC_Exec_2021_06_C)

International Network Working Group

Role of Education in enhancing Wellbeing and Life Outcomes for Military Service Members, Veterans and Families

Background

ASCN and Open Door are supporting and facilitating an International Webinar and Working Roundtable Program on Military, Veterans and Families Wellbeing.

This program is addressing a range of topics impacting Military members, Veterans and Families at points of transition across their life course in a Wellbeing construct. It commenced in August 2019 and builds on a range of initiatives around Wellbeing across the 5 Eyes partner countries (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, The US and The UK) over the past 10 years.

The program was initiated by Veterans Affairs New Zealand and NZ Defence Force is built on a real time webinar series lead by international thought leaders in the relevant areas of discussion and links people from across the 5 Eyes Countries.

The intent is to establish a conversation between people from the Domains of Government, Research, Service Providers and Advocacy across the 5 Eyes countries with the theme of “Transition – Achieving a Life Well Lived “.

In addition to the webcasts the Program has been the catalyst to a number of International Working Groups comprised of people from the Domains of Government, Research, Service Providers and Advocacy across the 5 Eyes Countries.

The purpose of the web series and the associated working group conversations is to get the topic firmly on to the agenda of stakeholders who have an interest in Veterans and Families Transition and Life After Service in each of the 5 Eyes Countries.

The program has launched conversations on a number of topics. One of these is “The Role of Education in enhancing Wellbeing and Life Outcomes for Military Service Members, Veterans and their Families.”

This discussion was launched on the 5th of February with the presentations by Barrett Bogue and Dr Andrew Morse from the US and Dr Ben Wadham from Australia. This presentation has been followed by presentations from Canada, Scotland and England.

To take things forward on this topic ASCN and Open Door have formed an International Network Working Group to explore and develop the idea of “The Role of Education in enhancing Wellbeing and Life Outcomes for Military Service Members, Veterans and Families.”

This group is being led by Professor Ben Wadham the Director of the Open Door Military, Veterans and Families Transition, Integration and Wellbeing Centre at Flinders University in Australia. He is being assisted in this task by Dr Andrew Morse, Assistant to the President for Board and Governmental Relations at the University of Northern Iowa where he is focused on student access and success, economic and workforce development, and industry innovation.

In the Group’s conversation we are keen to explore two dimensions. One is, how to encourage more Veterans and their immediate Family to consider Higher Education and University studies as part of their post service transition. The second is how do we encourage more Veterans to see a career as a Teacher/Lecturer, Researcher, Administrator and Leader in Higher Education as a possible career pathway.

About The International Network for the Educational and Professional Success of Service Members, Veterans and Military Families.

Our Why: We believe service members, veterans, and their families are forces of positive change in their workplaces and communities who have earned elective higher educational opportunities in recognition of their knowledge experience and service

Our Purpose: To serve as a global network for the creation, discovery, and exchange of knowledge, development of research opportunities and activities to broaden the educational and professional success of service members and veterans.

Our Functions

- *We work to understand the present by facilitating a global inventory of each participating nation’s significant policies, programs, and resources focused on supporting service members and veterans’ educational and professional success.*
- *We shape the future by:*
 - *serving as an international exchange of critical ideas, emergent practices, policy developments, and other key issues affecting the educational and professional success of service members and veterans via monthly virtual conference calls and an annual symposium;*
 - *providing connections for international and cross-disciplinary research and policy papers focused on exploring and advancing the educational and professional success of service members and veterans; and*
 - *Encouraging our national HEIs, public officials, and supporting parties to promote and facilitate educational opportunities for service members, veterans, and their families*

Our Composition

The Network operates as an international network of scholars and practitioners focused on elevating the educational and professional success of service members, veterans, and families. The following Nations are represented:

- *Australia*
- *Canada*
- *United Kingdom*
 - *England (also including Northern Ireland and Wales), and*
 - *Scotland*
- *New Zealand*
- *The United States*

Our Structure

The network is maintained by a planning group of five network members. Presently, the members of the planning group are:

- *Ben Wadham, Flinders University (Australia)*
- *Matthew Wyatt-Smith, Australian Student Veterans Association (Australia)*
- *Dr. Gerri Matthews-Smith (Scotland)*
- *Graham Cable, Anglia Ruskin University (England, Northern Ireland, Wales)*
- *Barrett Y. Bogue, Evocati LLC (USA)*
- *Andrew Morse, University of Northern Iowa (USA)*
- *Darryl Cathcart, Release Point Education (Canada)*

Our Membership

Membership of the network is open to anyone from Government, Higher Education and the University Sector, Business and Industry and Veteran and Families Advocacy who have an interest in the question of “How can Education enhance Wellbeing and Life Outcomes for Military Service Members, Veterans and Families”.

- NOTED: The Chairman noted the group is looking for a platform, like COMEC, where they can promote what is happening in their country in relation to broadening the educational and professional success of service members and veterans. The Chairman felt that COMEC could support by adding the groups research to the COMEC website noting it complements the work of COMEC and its activities. It would also raise the profile of COMEC internationally noting the unique nature of the MEC / COMEC set up.
- NOTED: Ms C Kinhead asked if the research should be risk assessed or quality assured before being added to the COMEC website?
- **ACTION: Ms C Kinhead to have an offline chat with the Chairman and colleagues on research assessment and send ideas and issues to the Secretary. This information would then be made available before a vote on the proposal.**
- NOTED: Professor P Ivey noted that Australia had introduced a sabbatical scheme which might be something the UK could from and COMEC could help introduce? Col D Gray will see what he can find out and suggested

involving other interested groups like the UK Reserve Forces Association who look at international opportunities for Reservists.

6. Treasurer's Report

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from the Treasurer (COMEC_Exec_2021_06_D)
- NOTED: 15 MECs have paid to date and there is an outstanding invoice from Sussex MEC from last year which the Chairman is following up.
- NOTED: The Treasurer requested any costs relating to the Conference to be identified at the earliest opportunity.

7. Reports from the Service Staff Officers

- RECEIVED: An Executive Summary from each of the Service Staff Officers:
 - a. Royal Navy (COMEC_Exec_2021_06_E1)

22 Jun 21

COMEC Executive

COMEC Executive Meeting: 24 Jun 21 – URNU REPORT

Introduction

1. *As the restrictions imposed by HMG eased in Q2 21, Face to Face (F2F) activity by the University Royal Naval Units (URNU) began to recommence. However, the re-start plan has been complicated by local circumstances and subtly different Road Maps being followed by the devolved administrations. The units have adopted an innovative approach to training delivery, often providing a blended format to meet the needs of Officer Cadets (OCs) who are studying remotely or are unable to attend on a Training Night.*

2. *The Units continue to work collaboratively within their regions, and with the Universities Department at BRNC, in order to place the Welfare Duty of Care (WDoC) of both OCs and staff at the centre of their planning.*

3. *The personnel situation within the URNU Organisation is improving with the majority of Command and all Coxswain positions due to be filled in Q3 21. However, due to ongoing gaps in some areas, the regional operating model illustrated in Annex A, continues to be utilised to provide stability and short-term sustainability.*

Command Climate

4. *To deliver against BRNC Command's mandated outputs and priorities, the Universities Department continues to strive to guarantee:*

- *a safe and secure environment;*
- *a respectful, inclusive, empowering & professional working environment;*

- *an atmosphere where honesty, openness & reasonable challenge flourishes;*
- *a strong safety culture led by intelligent risk management; and*
- *a strong community spirit looking after the URNU family.*

Priorities

5. *In line with Capt BRNC's intent, Commander Universities (Cdr U) is working with the URNU Commanding Officers (COs) to deliver the priorities set for the Universities Department for Term 21-2:*

- a. *Restart F2F external URNU CLM / ATS training by 12 Apr 21 and F2F URNU Training Nights by 17 May 21.*
- b. *Drawdown URNUs Southampton and Sussex in parallel with opening of URNU Solent by 31 Jul 21.*
- c. *Form two new URNUs in Belfast and East Midlands by 30 Aug 21.*
- d. *Deliver URNU Summer Deployment alongside URNU 'Summer Camps' by 30 Aug 21.*
- e. *Review URNU documentation ahead of next inspection window.*

6. *Looking ahead, as some degree of normality returns, the Universities Department will also endeavour to complete the following priority tasks in the medium term:*

- a. *Deliver reformed URNU Training Cadre concept by Oct 21.*
- b. *Roll out of IOC Training Syllabus to all URNU by Oct 21.*
- c. *Return to Business as Usual (BAU) Q4 21.*

COVID-19

7. *The nationwide lockdown which commenced in late Dec 20, alongside sS In Year Savings Measures, forced further adjustments to the organisation's planned restart programme for Q1 21. The re-start of F2F training had to be postponed however, local, regional and national initiatives were put in place to ensure that staff, OCs and TOs were able to continue to interact on a virtual basis.*

8. *As the restrictions eased a phased re-start commenced in Apr 21. All units have now restarted F2F training and a number of regional activities have occurred enabling, OCs to undertake a range of mandated training. A reduced Summer Deployment is currently underway, while Summer Camps, regional CLM and ATS are planned for Jul 21.*

Welfare Duty of Care (WDoC)

9. *At this difficult time, the need for WDoC to take primacy has been clearly identified. Each individual continues to be encouraged to considering how they can contribute to the mental and physical well-being of their colleagues. The permanent staff at unit level continue to signpost OCs, for whom they have concerns, to University Welfare Services, while additional risk mitigation measures have been investigated and implemented. Each unit now has a trained Mental Health First Aider in place, while progress has been made in identifying link RN / RNR Chaplains for each region.*

URNU Root & Branch Review.

10. *The transformational change required in the short / medium term, to imbed the recommendations of the 2* mandated root and branch review is progressing on schedule. BRNC Command is therefore confident that the changes that have already been implemented, and are currently being imbedded, will ensure that the URNU organisation is ready to support the Royal Navy as it transforms to meet the needs of the nation.*

11. *Over the last twelve months, URNU Permanent Staff and TOs have made significant progress in delivering outcomes within the five key Workstream (WS) areas: Governance; Training Syllabus; Administration; Training Delivery and Business Continuity.¹ These WS align with the URNU Organisation's core functions and recognise the fact that the organisation must evolve and transform while delivering BAU to the existing cadre of OCs. For situational awareness, the progress which has been made since the last COMEC Executive meeting is outlined below.*

13. Governance.

a. *V1.0 of the 2020 Edition of University Department Standing Orders, which incorporates the results of the mandate work that has been completed since Jun 20 has been issued. While v2.0, incorporating an updated Chapter on the URNU Training Cadre and a new section relating to Medical Cadets and Bursars is scheduled to be published in Oct 21.*

b. *The new URNU Mission Statement has been adopted by all units and now forms part of the URNU offer to its members:*

'To inspire individuals through leadership and maritime training, whilst facilitating a career in the Royal Navy for those who choose.'

c. **Regionalisation.** *The regional delivery model, as illustrated in Annex A, continues to be developed to ensure that it meets the needs of the organisation and the wider Royal Navy. In order to streamline the operating model and provide ongoing support with domestic engagement, work is now underway to align the URNU regions with Naval Regional Commands (NRC) with IOC of Sep 21.*

d. **URNU Transformation.** *The geographical laydown of the URNU organisation has been reviewed taking into consideration distribution of eligible*

¹ UTM 18/20 – Establishment of Workstreams to deliver University Royal Naval Units Review

Potential OCs. The URNU Transformation Plan, which encompasses the following, has been endorsed by both the Naval Executive Committee (NEC) and the Secretary of State (SoS)²:

(1) Optimisation of the organisation's footprint on the South Coast by amalgamating URNU Southampton and URNU Sussex to establishing a new URNU Solent within HMNB Portsmouth, with spokes reaching out to Southampton and Brighton.

(2) Formation of URNU Belfast, to exploit a substantially increased student footfall in the greater Belfast area, whilst ensuring Tri-Service representation in the University community, by operating alongside the established Army and Royal Air Force (RAF) University Service Units (USU).

(3) Establishment of URNU East Midlands, to take advantage of the high density of eligible students in the area whilst utilising available personnel released from other areas as part of the organisational review.

e. BRNC Command has also authorised the establishment a pilot to trial the Virtual URNU concept. This pilot will exploit the lessons learnt during the pandemic while substantially increasing the reach of the organisation.

14. Training Syllabus. *The URNUs have now been assigned a Training Requirement Authority which has approved the formal development of Role Performance Statement and a Formal Training Statement which form the basis of the new URNU Training Syllabus.*

*a. **Alignment.** Having liaised with the Maritime Reserve and considered good practice within other USUs, BRNC Command continues to work to align the URNU syllabus with the RNR's Initial Naval Training (Officer) syllabus.*

*b. **URNU Syllabus 2021** will be launched at the URNU Summer Training Conference at URNU Cambridge in Jul 21. The new syllabus takes account of the lessons learnt during the pilot and will reach IOC in Oct 21. Like the interim package, URNU Syllabus 21 is based on four learning pillars, to which OCs will be exposed throughout their time in the URNU.*

(1) Militarisation.

(2) Marinisation.

(3) Command, Leadership and Management.

(4) Adventurous Training & Sport.

² MinLords-PrivateOffice@mod.gov.uk_20210610_RE: 20210511-Optimisation of South Coast URNU Estate MinSub-OS

c. *The appropriateness of the new syllabus will continue to be monitored prior to reaching FOC in Sep 22. It aspires to deliver an enriched training experience, in a blended fashion, through enhanced learning opportunities designed to improve the likelihood of the long-term retention of individuals within the wider Naval family.*

15. **Training Delivery.** *During the course of the review, the vital role of the URNU Training Officer has been considered and evaluated. Whilst these individuals are List 7A reserve officers their TACOS are unique as they have no call out liability and are regarded as civilians in eyes of the law. However, the vital role that they play in the development of URNU OCs and the overall management of each URNU has now been recognised. The overarching mantra of: Recruit; Train; Retain; Recognise, has been fully adopted while a long-awaited through career professional development strategy has been put in place.*

16. **Business Continuity / Business as Usual (BAU).** *The workstream lead for this area has adopted the evolving changes while ensuring that the overall experience of current OCs remains positive. To achieve this a variety of unique business approaches have been exploited, so that the workstream lead can ensure that change is managed and that existing personnel are made fully aware of the reasons for change.*

Recruitment Strategy

17. *The URNU Webpages, that are hosted within the official RN website, are now in the process of being refreshed to take account of the transformational changes within the organisation.*

18. *Building on the success of last year's virtual recruiting campaign, the URNU organisation will continue to utilise a wide range of social media platforms to enhance its corporate image. Internal and external social media platforms will drive potential recruits towards the expression of interest facility on the webpage, significantly broadening the organisation's virtual footprint, while reducing its reliance on F2F interactions at Freshers' Fayres etc.*

Summary

19. *As the 20/21 academic year draws to a close, the URNU Staff and Training Officers will come together, for the first time, at a joint Training Conference to reflect on what has been achieved over the past 18 months. The vast majority of the targets set have been achieved, so we will be celebrating our successes while considering the impact that the CV-19 pandemic will have on how the URNUs operate in the future.*

20. *The organisation has gained a higher profile both internally and externally; providing personnel to support Operational and MACA tasking; transforming the geographical laydown of the URNU; easing the transfer between branches of the Royal Navy; and improving the administrative experience for all members. The 2* mandated root and branch review of the organisation has been completed and the organisation is now in the process of transforming to meet the needs of the new Royal Navy.*



N E Downing

Cdr RN

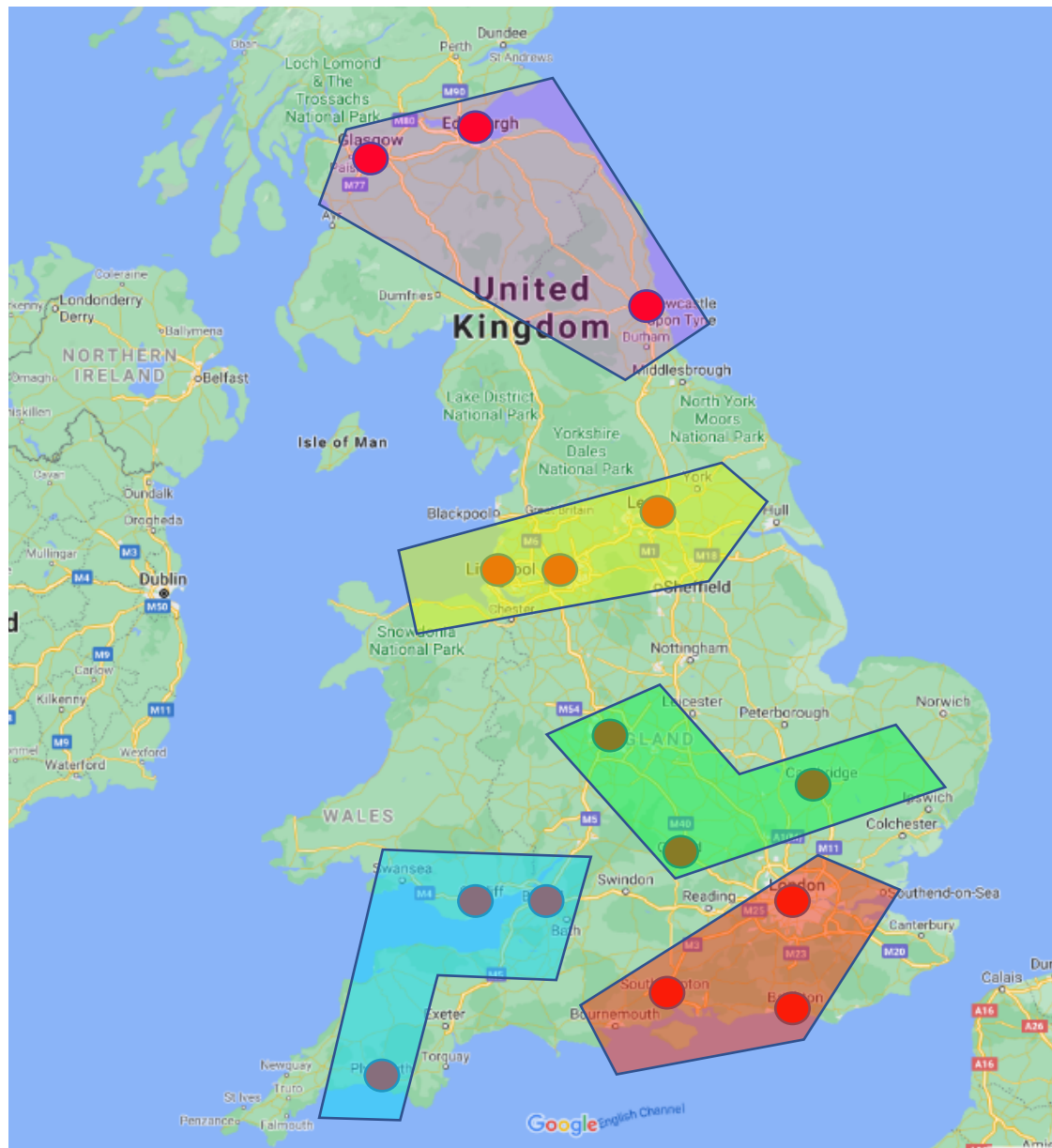
Commander Universities

Annex A to

COMEC Executive Meeting 25 Feb 21 – URNU Report

Dated 25 Feb 21.

URNU Regional Operating Model (Oct 20)



- NOTED: Cdr N Downing noted that URNU Solent, URNU Belfast and URNU East Midlands are expected to be operational in October 2021. The RN are also looking to offer a “pilot” to students outwith the URNU catchment area to experience the URNU offer, Dundee is being looked at for an outreach element.

- NOTED: The Chairman asked about URNU student numbers. Cdr N Downing noted they are almost at capacity (740 out of 765 maximum students). Cdr N Downing noted that targeting recruitment around A Level results worked well and was better value for money so this will be repeated in 2021. Wg Cdr M Dewar also noted success targeting recruitment during this period.
- NOTED: The Chairman asked about recruitment at Universities that have a higher proportion of overseas students or are outwith traditional catchment areas. Cdr N Downing noted they would look at all eligible students and liaise with local MECs to ensure the institution is represented.
- NOTED: Maj I Stoney commended the use of RN / RNR Chaplains noting the value of having them on the MEC to support mental health issues. Lt Col M Bishop noted the Army have a Chaplain Cadet Scheme who are placed on OTCs as part of their training.

b. Army (COMEC_Exec_2021_06_E2A & E2B)

G3/COMEC SITREP/RMAS/May21

25 May 21

UNIVERSITY OFFICER TRAINING CORPS – COMEC REPORT JUNE 2021

1. Commander OTC overview. *Virtual training has continued, although some face to face (F2F) activity has now resumed in line with national and devolved government direction and all extant Force Health Protection. Planning has continued throughout the lockdown in order to best prepare UOTCs for their Annual Deployment Exercises (ADX) and completion of Modules A and B. These ADX are now underway in Scotland with England, Wales and NI following shortly. Permanent staff have conducted staff leadership training, and the OCdts have been exposed to numerous special to arm presentations from Combat, Combat Support and Combat Service Support Corps and Regiments. Many have also received briefs from the Army Officer Recruiting Team and external speakers, including General Petraeus.*

2. GI. *UOTC funded OCdt establishment remains at 2570, with 3434 OCdts on the establishment of UOTCs (as at 25 May 21). Since the recruiting period in September/October 2020, UOTCs have attested 1486 new OCdts. The medical process, while much improved is still taking too long for some candidates and we continue to work hard to improve it.*

3. Output. *A full breakdown of UOTC output for FY 20/21 is included as an annex but headlines are: Despite COVID-19 UOTCs:*

a. *Commissioned 198 Regular officers (compared to 199 in 19/20)*

- b. *Commissioned 89 new Reserve officers into UOTCs. (Compared to 90 in 19/20).*
- c. *Transferred 89 officers into the Army Reserve. (Compared to 81 in 19/20).*
- d. *Transferred 303 soldiers into the Army Reserve (compared to 281 in 19/20).*

It should also be noted that there is a minimum three-year time of flight through a UOTC, so the impact of COVID on numbers will not be seen until 2022.

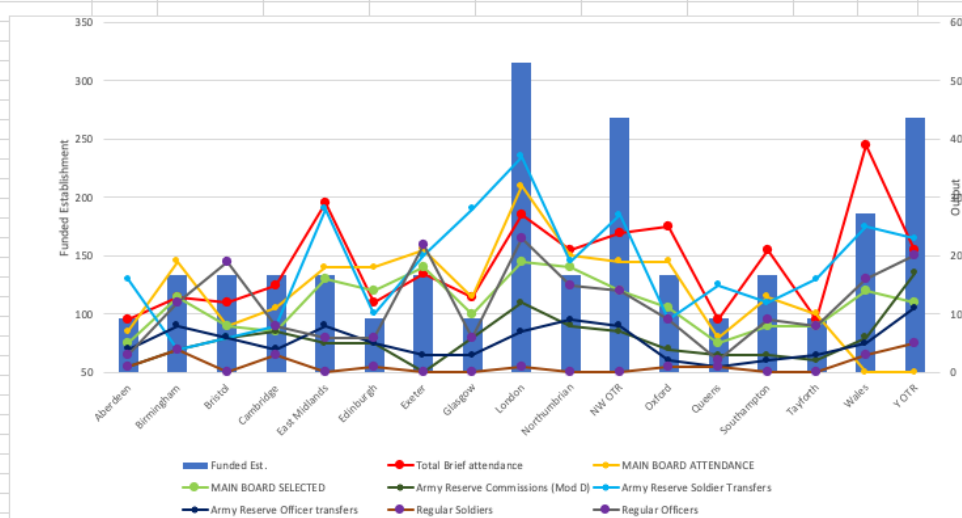
4. **G7 Military Training.** *Following last year's COVID-19 restrictions on annual camps, UOTCs will use this ADX season (May – June) to ensure maximum completion of modular training. There is a recognised need for activities to focus not just on military training but to expose the OCdts to as much engaging activity across as broad a spectrum as possible. There have been some difficulties in accessing Defence Training Estate; due mainly to the Field Army attempting to regain its currency through exercising. RMAS Gp HQ is working with affected UOTCs to resolve.*

4. **G7 Adventurous Training (AT).** *Despite a constraint on UOTCs for activity to remain within the UK for calendar year 2021, UOTCs have developed a limited but ambitious programme of UK based AT; including parachuting, canoe and kayak expeditions to the Lake District, coastal sailing around the UK and a wide range of mountaineering and walking. Obviously UOTCs remain keen to engage in overseas activity and planning activity is occurring in anticipation of the relaxation of COVID-19 constraints.*

5. **G8 Finance.** *The financial position remains difficult across Defence and UOTCs still remain subject to close scrutiny not least by the Basic Training Transformation Programme. COVID-19 reduced Reserve Service Days and Operational Costs significantly due to reduced Face to Face activity and the lasting impact is yet to be seen. UOTCs have been allocated approximately £8.25M in Reserve Service Days for 21/22, an increase in spend on the last full, unaffected year (2019).*

N Cheshire
Col
Commander OTC

	Funded Est.	Total Brief attendance	MAIN BOARD ATTENDANCE	MAIN BOARD SELECTED	Army Reserve Commissions (Mod D)	Army Reserve Soldier Transfers	Army Reserve Officer transfers	Regular Soldiers	Regular Officers	Total Output	Total Officer Output
Aberdeen	96	9	7	5	1	16	4	1	3	25	7
Birmingham	134	13	19	13	4	4	8	4	12	32	20
Bristol	134	12	8	8	6	6	6	0	19	37	25
Cambridge	134	15	11	7	7	8	4	3	8	30	12
East Midlands	134	29	18	16	5	28	8	0	6	47	14
Edinburgh	96	12	18	14	5	10	5	1	6	27	11
Exeter	134	17	21	18	0	20	3	0	22	45	25
Glasgow	96	13	13	10	6	28	3	0	6	43	9
London	316	27	32	19	12	37	7	1	23	80	30
Northumbrian	134	21	20	18	8	19	9	0	15	51	24
NW OTR	268	24	19	14	7	27	8	0	14	56	22
Oxford	134	25	19	11	4	9	2	1	9	25	11
Queens	96	9	6	5	3	15	1	1	2	22	3
Southampton	134	21	13	8	3	12	2	0	9	26	11
Tayforth	96	9	10	8	2	16	3	0	8	29	11
Wales	186	39	0	14	6	25	5	3	16	55	21
Y OTR	268	21	0	12	17	23	11	5	20	76	31
Total	2590	316	234	200	96	303	89	20	198	706	287



- NOTED: Col N Cheshire noted the challenges of fieldwork and accessing Defence Training Estate and the need to get students back on track. The use of an elongated medical questionnaire has helped filter cadets earlier in the process. Recruitment has been very successful using social media.
- NOTED: Col N Cheshire noted engaging external speakers in the virtual environment, notably General Petraeus supported through the Birmingham MEC. The Chairman asked if the virtual external speaker sessions could be videoed so we could link from the COMEC website in future.
- NOTED: The Chairman asked about the conversion of UOTC cadets joining the regular or reserve services. Lt Col M Bishop noted the need to look at the final year students rather than the total population noting approx. 500-600 out of 800 continue to undertake military service after they leave the OTC. Col N Cheshire noted the benefits of UOTC service for those going into other employment or education which is an important outcome for the Army.

c. Royal Air Force (COMEC_Exec_2021_06_E3)

20210611 – 6 FTS COMEC Report

11 Jun 21

Comdt 6 FTS

*COMEC Executive***COMEC EXECUTIVE MEETING 24 JUN – 6 FTS REPORT****Comdt 6 FTS Overview**

1. *A productive period for 6 FTS with successes in staff recruiting filling key gaps across our workforce, our Virtual Armed Forces Careers Office continuing to process student applications for Service as well as the most recent and welcome notification that we can resume UK based Adventurous Training events for the students: a key ATTRACT and RETAIN activity. Restrictions remain in place for other Force Development deliverables but signs are encouraging and UAS members are obviously keen to resume the wide range of activities we usually deliver. Unfortunately we are still unable to deliver any flying training or experience at the moment as the Grob Tutor aircraft fleet is still under an aircraft manufacturer directed grounding for technical reasons. There is a clear pathway back to flying and we are working hard to enable students to get back in the cockpit as soon as possible. Force Protection (FP) training has now stepped up a gear in the delivery of Phase 1 training, and our various FP training courses delivered at RAFC Cranwell are popular and well attended by students from across the organisation. Cognisant that this time of year is exam time for the vast majority of our students we continue to supplement this training with our Virtual Training Academy programme giving the students maximum flexibility to fit in their military education around their university studies.*

Recruiting

2. *Overall, the recruitment our numbers are strong and the shift to online recruiting has been largely successful and 6 FTS is on target to reach near full establishment. Issues with obtaining timely medicals have been significant this year and are expected to continue into the early spring as COVID impacts the ability of CAPITA to deliver the number of appointments required. This has resulted in delayed attestations, kitting and induction training which has a knock-on effect on what activities and training new joiners are able to take part in. We have had to be flexible in terms of retaining and extending the normal timelines for recruiting as well as ensuring that the students most affected by the impact of COVID on their recruitment into the RAF can be retained whilst their applications are processed. Students continue to participate in the many virtual engagement opportunities as we work through these challenges.*

UAS Student Population Breakdown

3. *Of the current student cohort (883 members), 31% are female and 69% male. Of our total number of students, 43.8% are studying a STEM subject of which 20.4% are female and 79.6% male. Within the STEM group 76.4% are studying a subject relating to engineering, with 16% females and 84% males. 14.5% of our total student population are BAME, and 13% of those studying STEM subjects are BAME. For comparison the current RAF diversity targets are 10% BAME and 15% Female inflow.*

HQ 6 FTS Armed Forces Career Office

4. *Part of the HQ continues to operate as a Virtual Armed Forces Careers Office and process applications from serving UAS students wishing to join the Regular RAF, either via the sponsorship scheme or Direct Entrant routes. To date we have received over 330 applications have been received, of which 45 have been awarded bursaries, another 30 still being processed. 48 candidates now have been allocated start dates for Initial Officer Training, with another 100 currently being processed for attendance at the Officer Aircrew Selection Centre (OASC). 90 candidates have either been rejected or withdrawn, with a good number intending to reapply. This continues to be a good news story for 6 FTS. This has directly improved the recruitment experience for students applying for Regular service as the wait times for processing their applications has come down from 16 weeks down to around 6-8 weeks. However, we are still encountering some delays due to COVID-19 as the capacity OASC has been affected by COVID social distancing measures resulting in a reduced output. We continue to work through the issues and process the applications as quickly as possible.*

Modular Initial Officer Training.

5. *Whilst we continue to deliver a blended virtual/physical training programme to our UAS students, with the relaxation of some COVID-19 restrictions we have significantly increased our face to face training opportunities at RAFC Cranwell. Since our last update the 6 FTS Force Protection Team have delivered Range & Security training, Induction courses, Fieldcraft training and First Aid courses. These courses have proved very popular, form part of the Phase 1 training syllabus and give a positive outlet for the OCdts that are keen to take part in physical activities and move away from the prevalence of virtual training/education.*

Re-introduction of Adventurous Training in the UK

6. *As of 26 May, UAS students have been able to participate in RAF Adventurous Personal Development Training where it is considered safe to do so. All travel will be in accordance with HMG and Devolved Administration policies, social distancing and hygiene measures in place and the training will be conducted when the usual risk assessments and emergency action plans being in place. This is a much-awaited part of the training we offer, which the UAS students are keen to undertake.*

COMEC Conference 2021

7. *Planning for the COMEC Conference 2021, 1 and 2 Sep, continues. The joint 6 FTS and COMEC team are steadily working through the details of the event is scheduled to take place at RAF Halton 1 and 2 Sep 21, COVID-19 restrictions permitting.*

Project TELUM

8. *TELUM In Service Date (ISD) has been delayed by at least 5 years due to SLT direction to incorporate a 'Net Zero at Point of Use' propulsion system in accordance with UK Govt (2050) and ASTRA (2040) aspirations; ISD no earlier than 2027. This is due to lack of tech maturity currently. NB. Electric propulsion is well understood technically and starting to be fielded globally: the issues are about Air Safety (3rd Party Aviation Risk associated with flying circa 20,000 minors per annum); military*

registration of the air system; governance and assurance. The eventual TELUM solution is expected to be either electric, hydrogen or some form of hybrid.

K Thompson

*K Thompson MA
SO2 Force Development
HQ 6 FTS*

- NOTED: Wg Cdr M Dewar noted endorsement of the UAS' as a Phase 1 training provider and its mandate to recruit 30% of the officer intake into the RAF each year. For progressing students this will mean they will not need to complete the first 6 weeks of training.
- NOTED: Wg Cdr M Dewar noted all aircraft are grounded by the manufacturer at present due to safety. It is expected flying we recommence from the end of this month with most students being able to fly again from October.
- NOTED: The Chairman commended the diversity of the student cohort.

d. Defence People (COMEC_Exec_2021_06_E4 & Reserve Forces Review 2030 attached separately)

DEFENCE PEOPLE (RF&C) UPDATE FOR COMEC – JUNE 2021

Defence Overview

1. *The department's priorities are focusing on the immediate challenges posed by living with COVID 19 and ensuring Defence's and HMG's outputs are not adversely affected. The department continues to work on the Spending Review and Integrated Foreign, Defence and Security Review. R&C remains actively engaged regarding any measures that might affect Reserves and Cadets.*

2. *MOD's response to Covid-19 has been deemed as a success and in particular the Reserves have demonstrated their value as part of the whole force. Approximately 2,300 reservists were initially called into permanent service, as part of the Covid-19 response force of 20,000; demobilisation of the majority has taken place although it has reached an irreducible minimum of c700 IRs and SQEP personnel. The main contributions from reservists were to work in co-ordination roles in local hubs; to provide logistics expertise; to deliver supplies of PPE; and to help construct the Nightingale hospitals. The enthusiasm from individual reservists was significant. There were very few appeals from employers and their overwhelming support, in a volatile situation, is testament to the successful employer engagement programme conducted by RF&C and DRM since 2014.*

3. *Defence is now working to identify lessons from this period and ensure that the possible adverse impacts of lockdown are managed through effective engagement of Reserves and the Reserve offer is not diminished.*

Reserves Policy

4. **Reserve Forces 30 Review.** *The Reserve Forces Review was published in May 2021. Conducted by a small team led by a senior serving reservist and former Minister of Armed Forces, Brigadier The Rt Hon the Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton TD PC. The report follows 10-months of research and engagement and suggests how Defence may build on earlier work under the £1.85-billion Future Reserves 2020 programme.*

a. *RF30 is capability driven and offers 18 recommendations for consideration. It is designed to help inform wider work to establish the UK's future defence and security requirements, taking account of the increasing need to meet emerging risks and threats. It sits alongside the recently published Integrated Review and the Integrated Operating Concept 2025.*

b. *Defence will engage with key stakeholders, including current and future employers of reservists, and other parts of government and industry, to fully understand the implications of the RF30 recommendations and their coherence with wider Defence work before reaching final decisions on the way forward. A formal, detailed response can be expected at the end of the year.*

5. **Use of Reserves.** *As part of the Department's focus on Enterprise Approach we are examining ways that we might make better use of the Reserves. Specifically, the Ex AGILE STANCE campaign will look at the ability to re-build a culture of readiness and re-establish our ability to mobilise reservists at mass and pace. This will require a supporting employer engagement LOD. We are actively considering the lessons arising from COVID 19 and how this and RF30 work shape the future role of Reserve Forces. Through the Defence Plan we are also looking to optimise the use of Reserves and develop better metrics to define the utility of reservists outwith Mobilisation.*

6. **RFCA Reform.** *The new RFCA NDPB structure and operating model is currently under development by RF&C and RFCA representatives, with support from Cabinet Office, HMT, and relevant teams in MOD. Internal MoD programme governance has been established and the intention is for legislative change to be affected through primary legislation to be brought forward in the third session. Good progress has been made on all fronts and the team (now at full complement) will be looking to engage with the wider RFCA network in due course.*

FR20 (Update info from the latest UK Armed Forces QSPS info)

7. *The trained strength of the Volunteer Reserves continues to be relatively stable. As at 1 April 2021, the trained strength of the FR20 population was 32,700 (from around 22,000 at the beginning of the Future Reserves Programme), with about 4,700 more in training.*

8. *This is comprised of:*

- a. *Maritime Reserve: 2,870*
- b. *Army Reserve: 26,940*
- c. *RAF Reserve: 2,890*

9. *Reserves from all Services continue to operate in every theatre alongside their Regular counterparts. Some 1,300 reservists are currently called out for permanent*

service. This reflects the numbers called out as part of the response to the COVID 19 pandemic (which reached approx. 2,300 at its peak) as well as for other operations in the UK and overseas.

Employer Engagement

10. **Overall Assessment.** We assess that EE has now reached an Operational Pause; FR20 is largely delivered, and largely successful. Preparations must now be made to move to the next phase of employer engagement which is likely to have 3 main sections:

c. **Retention of the MOD/Employer Relationship.** Essentially this will require effort to preserve and develop where necessary the work that has already been achieved with FR20 in the 2013-2021 timeframe. Key to this will be ensuring that the work outlined below does not impede or fracture that MoD/employer relationship.

d. **Support to RF30.** RF30 represents a new paradigm in EE terms. Both employers and employees/reservists will be asked to do more, often outside agreed or understood tempos and routines. Any campaign to develop or embed even part of RF30 will require a sophisticated EE campaign to ensure understanding and consent on all sides.

e. **AGILE STANCE Campaign Plan (ASCP).** As a campaign plan, AGILE STANCE may fundamentally change the way UK prepares, delivers and sustains her Armed Forces in the future. The role of Reserves in ASCP is being developed and will require a strong EE element in support, not least in the work being done to stand up a Strategic Reserve.

11. **COVID-19.** We are now looking beyond COVID-19 in EE terms so that lessons identified during the pandemic can be taken into core and utilised for the future. The EE Working Group on 29 Apr 21 began that process, with sS tasked to refine and present lessons identified over the summer for incorporation into a revised DPEES and DPEED. These documents will then be presented to E3G in Nov 21 for endorsement, after which they will be issued. Reserves continue to play a part in the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with around 400 still deployed. The response from employers in general has been excellent with very few disputed mobilisations, and most employers keen to help despite their own difficulties given the economic situation. RF&C continue to work in close collaboration with DRM on the planning and execution of Employer Engagement (EE) plans.

12. **Employer Recognition Scheme.** The revised ERS Directive was issued in Jan 21 and planning for 4 regional Gold award ceremonies is now underway. Proposals for ERS in NI were considered at the EE Working Group on 29 Apr 21 and may be included in the 2022 Directive if considered sufficiently mature. A review of the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) was undertaken by RF&C and reported in Dec 20. A number of recommendations have been included in the ERS Directive for 2021 including regional Gold Awards and the inclusion of support to cadet movements as desirable criteria for Gold and Silver awards. Other recommendations will be considered for inclusion in the 2022 Directive including the issue over awards to employers in Northern Ireland. Current numbers are 354 Gold winners, 976 Silver and

3000 Bronze. Of these, there are 14 Gold, 22 + 2 expired ERS Silver (i.e that expired and have not yet been renewed (2014-2017) and 22 Bronze winners in the University sector.

13. **Anchor Events.** Partnering with Defence (PwD) was successfully delivered in Mar 21, The online nature of the event allowed a much greater penetration with the employer audience (cf1000 registered attendees compared to around 300 for a physical event) and this format is likely to be used to a much greater extent in the future. The Defence Insight Brief (DiB) was delivered virtually in May, and Reserves Day will also use online engagement to a much greater degree in order to achieve better coverage with the target audiences. Reserves Day sees a change of tack this year as RF&C will deliver a film celebrating Reserve service to support a central, virtual Ministerial event which can then be utilised in support of regional events as commanders see fit. This provides the opportunity to place RD on a proper 'online footing' for the future. The model allows for greater coverage and penetration with target audiences, whilst minimising the inconvenience to reservists themselves, which has in the past been a source of friction.

14. **CS Reserves Challenge.** The picture remains positive, with continued progress in the number of Civil Servants joining the Reserves. Civil Servant Reservist (CSR) numbers sit at 1939 as at 1 Jan 21 – this is approximately 0.84% of the estimated eligible total of CS (and 0.49% of the overall total). The Civil Service continues to make up approximately 5.2% of the total Reserves trained strength. The CS Reserves Challenge campaign is due to conclude by 1 Apr 22 with MOD ceasing to be responsible for reporting figures and promoting recruitment.

Col Darin Gray VR

Assistant Head Reserves, Defence People (RF&C)

- NOTED: Col D Gray proposed a vote of thanks to COMEC and MECs. It has been 10 years since the introduction of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) and it is Armed Forces Week where the work of service people and employers are celebrated. In the Higher Education (HE) sector 14 Universities are Gold, 22 Silver and 22 Bronze in the Employer Recognition Scheme. The Chairman commended the success of the AFC over the last 10 years and the need to engage those Universities that have not signed up including extending reach to the Open University. Cdr N Downing also noted widely dispersed University campuses like the University of Highlands & Islands and Ms C Kinhead highlighted the University of the Third Age.
- **ACTION: The Chairman requested a working group be formed to discuss widening AFC University membership and Col D Gray, Cdr N Downing and the Chairman will meet to discuss further.**
- NOTED: The Reserve Forces Review (RF30) was published in May and shared with the group. There are 18 recommendations which are being considered and a detailed response is expected at the end of the year. For the HE sector there are opportunities where defence is looking to academic staff for input, as well as debating issues around national security and defence thinking. Consideration is being given for academic reservists to work with

University specialist units. The Maritime Enterprise Zone is one area that could be explored further with input from Cdr N Downing.

8. COMEC Conference 2021

- RECEIVED: An update on the conference preparations (COMEC_Exec_2021_06_F)
- NOTED: The Secretary and Ms C Kinkead provided an update on the conference as the Vice-Chair was unavailable. A draft itinerary and arrangements were shared with and approved by the Executive.
- NOTED: The Chairman had approached the Minister for Defence People and Veterans, the Rt Hon J Mercer MP who has agreed to attend the COMEC Conference but has now resigned. The new Minister has been invited but is unable to attend. The Chairman suggested using the slot and accompanying workshop to think about COMECs and the Chairman's work with supporting veterans which was approved.
- NOTED: It was confirmed a total of 12 cadets would be invited across all services.
- NOTED: The Chairman thanked all those involved in organising the conference.

9. COMEC Prize

- NOTED: The COMEC Prize Winner 2020-21 is APO Sam Baker of University of Birmingham University Air Squadron. The runners up are OCdt Osian Davies of Wales UOTC and OCdt Gerard Murphy of Leeds UOTC.
- NOTED: Ms C Kinkead noted the high standard of nominations and excellent supporting statements from Commanding Officers.
- CONSIDERED: Executive Committee to consider how to better engage USUs and Cadets in the COMEC Prize and its perceived value. Cdr N Downing also noted that the current prize criteria does not link well to URNU qualities.
- **ACTION: The Chairman requested the COMEC Prize criteria be discussed at the November COMEC meeting with specific input from the Service Staff Officers.**

10. Relations with MECs

- RECEIVED: An update on COMEC Executive discussions with MEC Chairs.
- NOTED: The Treasurer provide an overview of the previous MEC meeting and topics discussed. Numbers were smaller but this allowed for all to be involved in the discussions and update on their own MEC activities. It was noted by some MECs that having an "anchor" University that consistently supported the MEC seemed to work better operationally.
- NOTED: Professor M Siva -Jothy noted two key points that may not have come up in MEC meetings: 1) A common Terms of Reference was an issue as MECs evolve these locally. A refresh of these by COMEC in consultation with the MECs may help reconnect them centrally. 2) MECs are not taken

seriously by many of the University Executive. There is a constitutional responsibility to report to Vice-Chancellors. One solution would be to have a Vice-Chancellors representative on each MEC. It was also noted the MEC Chairman could also play a role here and brief their associated Vice-Chancellors annually.

- CONSIDERED: Notification to MEC Chairs when there is a change of USU CO, and integration of MECs into induction of new COs when starting new post. It was noted this should be happening as part of the handover and if not this should be reported to the appropriate Service Staff Officer. Cdr N Downing noting operational challenges of formalising this due to short notice of appointments. It was agreed therefore that COMEC recommends notification by Services / USUs of the change of a USU CO to the MEC where possible.

11. Membership of the Executive

- RECEIVED: An update on nominations for the 1 upcoming Executive vacancy.

12. Any Other Business:

- CONSIDERED: Any other business at the discretion of the Chairman.

13. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings:

- APPROVED: The dates and venues of future meetings subject to pandemic restrictions:
 - Wednesday 1st – Thursday 2nd September 2021 (RAF Halton, Conference)
 - Thursday 18th November 2021 (ULOTC, London)
 - Thursday 17th February 2022 (Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting)
 - Thursday 19th May 2022 (ULOTC, London)