

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES 13 December 2024

Minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting held 09.30am on 13 December 2024
online via Teams and in person at the Victory Services Club, London

Name	Initials	Category of Trustee/Staff/Observer	Attendance
Trustees			
Hans Pung (Chair)	HP	Independent Trustee	Y
Wendy Cartwright	WC	Independent Trustee	Y online
Victoria Wilson (Deputy Chair)	VW	Independent Trustee	Y
Sue Davies	SD	Independent Trustee	Y online
Frances Nash	FN	Independent Trustee	Y
Jonathan Bell	JB	Independent Trustee	Y
Lieutenant General Sir Nick Pope	NP	Cobseo Trustee	Y Online Until item 4
Major General James Senior	JS	MoD Trustee	Apologies
Zoe Bishop	ZB	MoD Trustee	Y online
Captain Caroline Dix RN	CD	HMT Trustee	Apologies
Peter Kellam	PK	DA Trustee (Wales)	Y online
John Mooney	JM	DA Trustee (Scotland)	Y online
Vacancy		DA Trustee (Northern Ireland)	Vacancy
Collette Musgrave	CM	Family Federation Trustee	Y online
Anisha Worbs	AWo	OVA Trustee	Apologies
Others			
James Greenrod	JG	Observer - MoD	Y online
Matthew Seward	MS	Observer – Cabinet Office (OVA)	Y
Anna Wright	AWr	Staff - CEO	Y
Carol Stone	CS	Staff – Director of Grants	Y
Liz Rankin	LR	Staff – Director of Finance & Operations	Y online
Claire Rick	CR	Staff -Interim Director of Strategy	Y
Martin Dyson	MD	Staff -Head of Risk and Compliance	Y
Steven Inman	SI	Staff – Head of Strategic Grants and Relationships	Y
Sian Butler	SB	Staff – Grants Manager – Capital Projects	Y
Carol Hartley	CH	Staff – Grants Manager	Y
Lottie Answorth-Moore	LAM	Staff – Project Coordinator	Y
Emma Pagan–Skelley	EPS	Staff – Grants Officer	Y online
Karen Addison	KA	Staff – Grants Officer	Y online
Alex Stainer	AS	Staff – Corporate Governance Manager and Minute taker	Y

Item No.	Item	Lead
1	Meeting Opening	
1.1	<u>Welcome and Introductions</u> Apologies were received and accepted from CD, JS and AWo. The meeting was quorate in line with the Articles of Association. The Chair opened the meeting and extended a welcome to those joining virtually and in the room.	
1.2	<u>Declarations of Interest: Confirmation of completion and return</u> It was confirmed that all declaration of interest forms had been received for those attending the meeting. No conflicts had been declared.	
1.3	Approve minutes of the last Board meeting held on 25 October 2024 (Annex 1) The Board approved the minutes of the last meeting of the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust Board held on 25 October 2024 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
1.4	<u>Review and receive update on actions arising</u> (Annex 2) The Board reviewed the current outstanding actions and updated actions log.	
1.5	<u>Appointment of new Trustee</u> Following the approval of the Minister for Veterans and People, the Board appointed Jonathan Bell as an independent trustee for the initial term of 2 years.	
2	Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (annex 3)	
2.1	<u>CEOs report</u> AWr thanked Trustees for their swift response for approving the written resolution to award two grants for the LGBT Financial Recognition Scheme.	
2.2	The next Board meeting in February would be held at the RBLI premises in Aylesford, Kent, one of the Trust's capital grant beneficiaries. AS would liaise with Trustees regarding the arrangements. The aim was to hold one Board meeting per year in a remote location, near the location of strategic grant beneficiaries. The Board suggested potential future locations such as the Midlands or Newcastle or one of the Devolved Nations.	AS
3	Governance	
3.1.1	<u>Budget reforecast for approval</u> (Annex 4 & 4a) LR introduced the budget following the annual re-forecasting exercise and highlighted the increase in the staffing line, the forecast was to spend less on staffing until the end of the financial year. There would be an increase in National Insurance (NI) following the budget announcements.	
3.1.2	Trustee observed that carrying less staff was good from a financial point but not from a staffing perspective, concerns were raised about overstretching staff. It was confirmed there would be recruitment in the new year for a business analyst, and an additional grants officer had just been recruited.	
3.1.3	It was confirmed that there had been no indication of additional funding to cover the increase in NI contributions, but the current Trust finances would be able to absorb it.	
3.1.4	Remuneration and Nomination Committee would be looking at the establishment staffing level at their next meeting. The Trust was lean compared to similar organisations, with 26 staff/20.6FTE.	
3.1.5	The Board approved the operational budget reforecast.	
3.2	<u>Audit & Risk Committee update</u> (Date of last meeting: 02.10.24) No further update since the last Board meeting.	
3.3	<u>Ethics Advisory Panel update</u> (Date of last meeting: 17.10.24)	

	No further update since the last Board meeting.	
3.4	<u>Remuneration and Nominations Committee update</u> (Date of last meeting: 20.11.24)	
3.4.1	WC reported the following on behalf of the committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health & Safety had been added to the Terms of Reference, and work on how the reports would be delivered was taking place. Board composition was discussed alongside Wrigleys questions about independent and non-independent trustees, which needed clarifying. Preparation for the recruitment of two new independent trustees with grant and HR speciality had been supported by the committee. The next internal audit on HR was discussed. 	
3.4.2	AWr gave an update on the public appointments process for the independent trustee recruitment. Once the vacancies were live on the site the link would be distributed to Trustees to circulate through their networks.	
3.5	<u>Grants Committee update</u> (Date of last meeting: 21.11.24)	
3.5.1	SD reported the following on behalf of the committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants for three new programmes under the Covenant Fund (Hidden Voices, Service Women Seen and Heard, Apart not Alone) were approved. Hidden Voices was undersubscribed for round one. Thanks was given to grant staff for their work in bringing the grants to the committee and their strong presentations. Conversation would be taking place regarding streamlining the grants committee papers. Any view or comments from Trustees to be directed to SD, AWr or CS. Thanks was given to CM, as it had been her last grants committee meeting before she retired by rotation. 	
3.6	<u>Adoption of Matters reserved for the board and annual planner</u> (Annexes 5 & 5b)	
3.6.1	Additions/amendments requested by the Board: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add to the constitution that the intention is to always have more independent Trustees on the Board than from government departments. Section 1.6 – change from ratify to report. Add the Trust reserves power to affiliate the organisation with umbrella partnerships Remove reference to recruitment through an open process. Recruitment of independent trustees – include eight independent trustees, with one being the Chair, but remove reference to the appointment process. 	AS
3.6.2	Suggested for future discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether the quorum needs amending to reflect a division of independent and government officials. 	
3.6.3	AS to present a resolution to the Board to create a standing order on what a Chair's Action could entail (section 1.6).	AS
3.6.4	The appointments of the CEO and Accounting Officer goes through the sponsor department, which is out of Board control, but the Board do have oversight. AS to produce a separate document detailing the process, which will speak to future iterations of the Matters Reserved for the Board.	AS
3.6.5	The Board approved the Annual Planner and the Matters Reserved for the Board subject to the above amendments.	
4	Covenant Fund	
4.1	<u>Bereaved Grant programme</u> (Annexes 6-6c)	
4.1.1	MD introduced the research report and programme design and confirmed the OVA and the MoD had been briefed on the contents of the report and the statutory elements were being checked for accuracy.	
4.1.2	The Board discussed and the following points were made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sustainability and exit strategy for the proposed programme of work would play a key factor in the assessment. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There could be an opportunity to link together statutory and non-statutory in a seamless process. There was additional funding that other agencies could use if they wished. • It needed to be more explicit that the bereaved find support difficult to navigate, the aspiration should be that it needed to be easy to navigate and not make it more confusing. • It was noted that the research that underpinned the programme was a small sample group, due to the nature of the subject, with the majority bereaved through suicide. • Alma Economics had tried to reach all, and the sample group were the ones that wanted to speak. Successful applicants would be required to reach a wider beneficiary group. 	
4.1.3	<p>The Board approved the high-level programme design for the bereaved grant programme 2025/26.</p> <p>The expressions of interest would be brought to the Board in May, with the intention to make a single grant at the September meeting.</p>	
4.2	<p><u>Proposed Solicited bid request under the “Understanding Complex Problems and Identifying Solutions” Covenant Fund stream (Annex 7)</u></p>	
4.2.1	<p>MD presented the request and noted that the Board would be asked for additional consideration to start discussions to mirror this bid in Wales. The high-level programme design would be brought to Board in March 2025.</p>	
4.2.2	<p>The Board discussed and the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sustainability of the programme. • Use the term “justice system” not criminal justice system. • The gap that needed to be filled in Scotland. • Being aware of the work Nova Scotland were doing within the statutory sector. 	
4.2.3	<p>The Board approved the executive to approach Nova Scotland to invite them to submit an application.</p>	
4.2.4	<p>The Board approved the executive to begin discussion with appropriate parties in Wales.</p> <p>[NP left the meeting at 10.40am – the meeting remained quorate.]</p>	
4.3	<p><u>Apart Not Alone programme (Annexes 8-8b)</u></p>	
4.3.1	<p>MD introduced the research report and programme design, reminding the Board that the open programme for Apart Not Alone had been decided by the Grants Committee, and this item was for a focussed solicited grant.</p> <p>[.....]</p> <p>[Information has been withheld here in line with the requirements of section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – prejudice to commercial interests. A public authority is entitled to withhold information under this provision where disclosure of that information would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any persons or organisations, including the AFCFT itself.]</p>	
4.3.2	<p>The Board discussed and the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board complimented the team on the development of the programme, the collaborative work and the thoughtful, deliberate process. It felt strategic and was a good model for the future. • Career development for spouses and how it was pulled together across the portfolio would be of interest. • The challenge of childcare was noted as was the work done by Greenwich and the MoD in how to incentivise partners. • The MoD Families’ team strategy until 2031 included a commitment to review the action plan, childcare, wrap-around childcare and funding for early years stage, and supporting the sector to meet the demand, particularly in remote locations. 	
4.3.3	<p>The Board approved the high-level programme design for a solicited grant, [.....]</p> <p>[Information has been withheld here in line with the requirements of section 43(2) of the</p>	

	<p>Freedom of Information Act 2000 – prejudice to commercial interests. A public authority is entitled to withhold information under this provision where disclosure of that information would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any persons or organisations, including the AFCFT itself.]</p> <p>The application would come back to Board for approval in March 2025.</p>	
4.4	<u>Embedding Prevention of Veteran Suicide (Annexes 9-9a)</u>	
4.4.1	SI introduced the grant and highlighted that the applications scoring 9 did not include one from Scotland, and recommended the Board also approved one of the three applications from Scotland that scored 8.	
4.4.2	<p>The Board discussed and the following points were made:</p> <p>[.....]</p> <p>[Information has been withheld here in line with the requirements of section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – prejudice to commercial interests. A public authority is entitled to withhold information under this provision where disclosure of that information would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any persons or organisations, including the AFCFT itself.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Trust would ensure every grant holder made use of our Impact Hub, to get a rich set of data. 	
4.4.3	<p>The Board approved five applications scoring 9 and five applications scoring 8, including one in Scotland.</p> <p>This left an unallocated balance which it was agreed later in the meeting to use towards the Free From Fear programme.</p>	
4.5	<u>Serving Families on the Move (Annexes 10-10b)</u>	
4.5.1	KA introduced the grant.	
4.5.2	<p>The Board discussed and the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme was a mix of increasing the number of services being provided and supporting existing services. The assessment would have noted duplication, but there was high demand. The two-year programme gives the opportunity to learn where the gaps that need filling are and to increase support. Believed this was the first time there had been a programme specifically for this, it had been well received and would be refined. Geographical spread and need – a large part of the assessment was working with the applicants on their local need and how to scale up and meet it. The executive was satisfied the spread and vicinity of the programmes aligned with who they were going to support. Over the 3 years the geographical spread, including across the devolved governments, would be monitored. The lack of projects above the line from the devolved nations or delivered UK wide. This could be added as an area of interest in future rounds. 	
4.5.3	<p>The Board approved all 11 applications scoring 8 and above.</p> <p>This exceeded the budget by £95k which would be pulled from the round 2 budget.</p> <p>[The meeting adjourned from 11.15 – 11.30]</p>	
4.6	<u>Free from Fear (Annexes 11-11b)</u>	
4.6.1	CH introduced the one-year programme and applications.	
4.6.2	<p>The Board discussed and the following points were made:</p> <p>[.....]</p> <p>[Information has been withheld here in line with the requirements of section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – prejudice to commercial interests. A public authority is entitled to withhold information under this provision where disclosure of that information would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any persons or organisations, including the AFCFT itself.]</p>	

4.6.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing the data and being clear on the need – there was discussion on the source of partner abuse data, with Kings College London and Crime Survey for England and Wales 2020 being cited. How this programme fit into the work taking place across the public sector agenda. <p>The Board approved the application scoring 9, and four applications scoring 8. The overspend would be funded from the underspend from Embedding Prevention of Veteran Suicide and grant returns and withdrawals.</p>	
5	Thrive Together (Annex 12)	
5.1	SI introduced the paper.	
5.2	The Board approved £765,150 to Brooke House as the Thrive Together NI grant holder, for phases 2 and 3.	
5.3	The Board approved the existing mechanism for decisions on final budget arrangements to be extended to NI with delegation to the Executive.	
5.4	The Board congratulated the team for managing a seamless progression.	
6	OVA Capital Fund (Annex 13)	
6.1	SB introduced the paper for a decision on the application from Beyond the Battlefield for a Capital Development grant, under the OVA Capital Housing Fund for 2024-25 financial year.	
6.2	The Board approved a £25k Capital Development grant to Beyond the Battlefield.	
7	Meeting close	
7.1	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Trustee sought clarity on the Trust's communication strategy, particularly in regard to using the social media platform X, due to recent controversies. CR confirmed that the communications team were conscious of the issues and were monitoring where the Trust social media followers were. Annual figures would be presented to Board. The current position on using X was that as long as central government were using the platform the Trust would also continue.</p>	
7.2	<p><u>Dates of the next Board meetings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 February 2025 (Annual Trustees Meeting) take place at RBLI, Aylesbury, Kent 21 March 2025 9 May 2025 12 September 2025 5 December 2025 13 February 2026 (Annual Trustees Meeting) 	
7.3	<p>The Chair thanked trustees, staff, executive and the wider sponsors for their work and input, and all were wished a happy Christmas and new year.</p> <p>There being no further business the meeting ended at 12:00pm</p>	
<p>Written resolutions</p> <p>Record of written resolutions approved out of meeting since the last meeting on 25 October 2024:</p> <p>LGBT Financial Recognition Scheme</p> <p>A resolution was passed on 4 December 2024 to award Fighting With Pride £54,900 and The Royal British Legion £31,500 to support veterans who, when they served, were negatively impacted by the LGBT Ban and are therefore now eligible to apply for the MOD's Financial Recognition Scheme.</p>		

Grants awarded

Embedding Prevention of Veteran Suicide

Request ID	Organisation	Project Title	Project Location	Awarded
8292	Inspire	Open Mind	Northern Ireland	£ 100,000
8250	Ely Centre	Operation Blue Sky	Northern Ireland	£ 49,608
8274	The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association – Forces Help	Sleep Well Project	Scotland	£ 98,826

8308	Adferiad Recovery	Veteran Peer Mentoring Training Programme	Wales	£ 100,000
8267	RMA-The Royal Marines Charity	Prevention of RM Veteran Suicide	England	£ 96,000
8314	Northumberland County Council	Combat Invisible Wounds	England	£ 90,000
8278	The Bridge for Heroes	Bridging the Gaps	England	£ 48,909
8287	Tom Harrison House	Strengthening the Safety Net	England	£ 100,000
8259	UK Men's Sheds Association (UKMSA)	Armed Forces and Veteran's Sheds.	UK-wide	£ 94,645
8269	PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide	PAPYRUS - Suicide Prevention Training	UK-wide	£ 82,170
			Total committed	£ 860,158

Serving Families on the Move

Request ID	Organisation	Project Location	Project Title	Awarded
8162	Children 1st	Scotland	Forces New Beginnings	£ 120,000
8175	Fun First	Scotland	Fun First	£ 61,869
8178	Earthtime	Scotland	RAF Lossiemouth Waddle Toddle	£ 29,078
8187	Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale	Wales	Military Moves Made Easy	£ 117,561
8112	CITIZENS ADVICE PORTSMOUTH	England	Relocation Support Hub	£ 115,000
8170	Home-Start Richmondshire	England	Settling in to Catterick	£ 120,000
8174	Vennature	England	Vennature Thriving Families Garrison Arrivals	£ 120,000
8181	Carterton Family Centre	England	Serving Families Support @ CFC	£ 106,420
8183	Community Resource	England	Shropshire Armed Forces Outreach Project	£ 120,000
8185	Reading Force	England	Bookclubs for Military Partners/Spouses	£ 120,000
8188	The Balsam Centre	England	Community Connections	£ 65,477
				£ 1,095,405

Free from Fear

Request ID	Organisation	Project Title	Project Location	Awarded
8346	West Mercia Women's Aid	The Penelope Project	England	£ 149,931
8317	Aurora New Dawn	Armed Forces Domestic/Sexual Violence/Stalking Helpline	England	£ 150,000
8342	Independent Domestic Abuse Services (IDAS)	Specialist Military Domestic Abuse Service	England	£ 117,665
8345	North Devon Against Domestic Abuse - NDADA	Education, Safety & Support (ESS)	England	£ 135,900
8335	Reducing the Risk or RtR	Military Domestic Abuse Torch Bearer	England	£ 150,000
			Total	£ 703,496

Thrive Together

Request ID	Organisation	Project Title	Project Location	Awarded
8394	Brooke House	Veterans' Pathways	Northern Ireland	£ 765,150
			Total	£ 765,150

OVA Capital Fund

Request ID	Organisation	Project Title	Project Location	Awarded
8358	Beyond the Battlefield	Harbour House Expansion	Northern Ireland	£ 25,000
			Total	£ 25,000