# MINUTES FOR

## LOWLAND RFCA BOARD MEETING OF

## 25 JUNE 2020

**Present**: Captain Cowan (in the Chair), Brigadier d’Inverno, Colonel O’Meara, Colonel Singh, Colonel Stimpson, Colonel Wilkinson, Group Captain Coombes, Commander MacTaggart, Commander Poulton-Watt, Commander Stephen, Lieutenant Colonel Robertson, Lieutenant Colonel Urquhart, Major Milroy, Squadron Leader Kahn, Squadron Leader Morrison, Mr Grieve and Mr Mackinson.

**In Attendance**: Group Captain Leggat, Commander Farmer, Lieutenant Youngson, Colonel (Retired) Shields (Chief Executive), Mrs Emslie (Head of Finance), Mrs Greenwood (Head of Estates, Mr Vooght (Head of Engagement) and Colonel (Retired) Mathew (Secretary).

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting which was being held via the video conferencing application Zoom.

a. The Chairman told the Board that he had received apologies from the President and Captain Smith RN (represented by Lt Lynsey Youngson). Sqn Ldr Khan was also representing Air Officer Scotland.

b. The Chairman briefed the Board that it was with real regret that he and the Board were unable to say a fond farewell to Colonel Gibson, who retired as Chief Executive of Lowland RFCA in May 2020 owing to the Covid19 crisis but assured the members that a suitable farewell event would take place in due course.

2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** Members had been furnished with a copy of the minutes of the meeting of 20 February 2020. The Members were asked if they had any amendments before signing and there were none forthcoming.

3. **Matters Arising**  There were no matters arising which would not be dealt with elsewhere in the agenda.

4. **Service Updates** Members had been sent copies of the Service updates.

a. **Update on Maritime Reserves** A written update on Maritime Reserves update dated Mar 20 had been provided and Lt Youngson had provided an update from HMS DALRIADA dated 19 Jun 20. These reports are attached at Annex A. The Board were also briefed on the following:

(1) For the RNR, the focus was now on the return to full capability whilst maintaining the critical output. Covid had proved to be very challenging but the RNR had coped well. Reservists had also been very pro-active in volunteering for mobilisation. HMS SCOTIA had 5 personnel and 4 were on standby. The RMR had 13 personnel who were mobilised.

(2) Engagement had proved to be a casualty as a consequence of Covid restrictions. The virtual space was being used to good effect and video images of ships’ companies in action had been produced to permit a semi-interactive experience.

b. **Update on Army Reserve and 51 Brigade** A written update had been provided that contained both Army Reservist information and that of the ACF. The update is attached at Annex B. Colonel Stimpson asked the Board to note that:

(1) It had been a busy time for 51 Inf Bde as it was heavily engaged in OP RESCRIPT which was to provide support to the Scottish Government. The rapid response of the Brigade had proved yet again the value of reservists in being able to react in an agile manner to operational imperatives. A lot of reservists had volunteered for mobilisation but the uptake by the MOD had been relatively low. 350 military are engaged in support operations in Scotland but only 150 were reservists.

(2) As with the RN and RNR, engagement was at a standstill. There had been a few employer related issues with mobilisation and it was clear that a lack of experience at unit level was the main culprit. There had also been some lamentable decisions made, for instance the posting of mobilisation papers through Royal Mail when most business offices were closed with staff working from home.

(3) Catch-up training would put a huge pressure on the training estate and the knock-on effect would fall upon the reserves and cadets who had a lower priority for access to the estate.

c. **Update on the RAF and RAuxAF** A written update had been sent to Board members and is attached at Annex C. Group Captain Coombes briefed the Board that:

(1) The numbers of regular service personnel in Scotland was in decline and this was an issue that AOS was dealing with.

(2) As a consequence of Covid19 HQ Air Command had published new ways of working and face to face activity had clearly ceased.

(3) The increasing numbers of reservists had given a new impetus to the RAF to consider how they could best be used in the growing fields of Cyber and Space.

d. **Summary** The main themes running through the Service updates were:

(1) There was clearly a need for reservists to move into a new way of working and a blended approach looked like the new model for the future.

(2) Mobilisation had generally gone well but a few glitches meant that inevitably there were lessons to learn.

(3) The Chief Executive briefed the Board that:

(a) How to engage and influence when Covid19 placed real restrictions on the usual activity was his main issue.

(b) The Board also needed to take into account what the impact of the Tailored Review might be. The report had been accepted by the MOD but there had been little output from RF&C as they were heavily engaged in the MOD’s Covid19 response. The Board needed to be prepared for the recommendations to be implemented very rapidly and with little consultation as RF&C would be playing catch-up. If there was no progress soon then the Chairman and Chief Executive may have to approach the wider membership to alert them to the risks and garner their support.

5. **Lowland RFCA Business Outputs**

a. **Chief Executive’s Report** The Chief Executive’s overview of ongoing matters is attached at Annex D. The Chairman went on to use the report to update Board members on the following points:

(1) There were possible opportunities for the Reserves in future roles in Homeland Resilience and recruiting and upskilling young people during what is likely to be the impending economic recession. Likewise cadets will have a role in terms of inspiring young people in lockdown. The Association had offered to engage in IDSR and RF30 through CRFCA

(2) The RFCA Tailored Review could see the Association seeking to ‘force’ the issue if progress was stalling. The Association would ensure that the Lowland voice was ‘loud and clear’, seeking to be in the vanguard and not fighting for lost causes.

(3) CRFCA’s had plans for all RFCAs to migrate to one central platform on the GOV.UK website. We supported the GOV.UK site but firmly believe that the Association needed to retain its own Lowland RFCA website to better communicate regionally as well as to host supporting documentation for the staff, Board Members and Association Members.

(4) The Association would be monitoring the DIO’s Future Defence Infrastructure Strategy (FDIS) which could subsume RFCA facilities management business.

(5) The Association was energising, as best it could, the four Lowland RFCA Association Areas. In all likelihood one online meeting per Area would be organised between now and September/October. Meanwhile work continued to develop the Association Members’ area on the website.

b. **Accommodation and Works** The works updateis attached at Annex E.

The Chairman asked Mrs Greenwood if she had anything to add to the report and Mrs Greenwood stated that:

(1) There had been little spend in the Estates area because of Covid19 restrictions on work so the department were now concentrating on big projects that could be started as soon as working restrictions had been lifted.

(2) There had been an uplift in the Reactive Maintenance grant and this will probably be need for the emergent asbestos work that the Association was facing.

c. **Engagement** The Engagement update is attached at Annex F.

(1) The Head of Engagement briefed the Board on the following:

(a) He requested funding of £33,500 to support his recruiting support responsibilities and a further £10,000 to support his engagement support activities. **The Head of Engagement explained what activities this funding would cover and the Board agreed to these grants from RGI.**

(b) The Association was still receiving enquiries regarding the Armed Forces Covenant.

(c) The Silver and Gold awards dinners are still being planned with the Gold dinner being a joint event and the Silver dinner being separate events for the RFCAs in Scotland.

(d) The cadets had been engaged in Armed Forces Week and had done an outstanding job. The plan to get cadets to nominate the adult volunteers they most admire for awards (Cadet Adult Volunteer Recognition Awards (CARA)) was progressing well and there had been a great uptake by employers and industry with very generous donations to the scheme.

(2) Mr Grieve asked the Board to note the hard work of the 2 REEDs who, despite Covid19 restrictions, had maintained a good interface with employers.

6. **Cadets and Youth**

a. **SCC** A written update had been provided to the Board and this is attached at Annex G. Commander Farmer also asked the Board to note that:

(1) In the absence of any face to face training the Sea Cadets had focussed their activity on virtual training. Promotion boards, cadet forums and syllabus training packages had all been undertaken by the CFAVs and cadets.

(2) An element of lock-down fatigue was beginning to emerge amongst the cadets in particular, especially as much of their school work was being undertaken remotely during the day.

(3) A return to normal training pamphlet has been produced. Phase 2 of the return to training was concentrated on the CFAVs with cadets returning to face to face training being in Phase 3.

b. **ATC** A written update had been provided to the Board and this is attached at Annex H. Group Captain Leggat asked the Board to note that:

(1) Like the SCC, the virtual space was being used to conduct training with the cadets. A fair degree of training for the ATC was already on-line so the adoption of virtual training had been relatively painless.

(2) There was a need to look after those cadets who did not have access to IT resources to permit them to conduct virtual training.

(3) The main focus of effort was to keep in touch with CFAVs and cadets, to make them feel part of the cadet organisation and to maintain their interest in the cadet experience.

(4) Over 300 cadets had achieved the SQA Level 5 award in Aviation Practice 2 immediately prior to lock-down which was a great achievement.

(5) The ATC were working on a recovery plan but the information was changing rapidly.

c. **ACF** A written update had been provided to the Board and this was included in the 51 Brigade update attached at Annex B. Colonel O’Meara briefed the Board that much of what the ACF was doing was similar to that of the other 2 cadet organisations. In particular:

(1) A safeguarding support team was being established in Regional Command whose aim was to take some of the safeguarding burden off the battalion CEOs.

(2) There had been great work undertaken by CFAVs and cadets to develop virtual training packages, competitions and awareness groups to ‘keep the flame alive’.

(3) The re-training and re-qualification of CFAVs was Phase 1 for the ACF as part of its recovery plan to return to normal face to face training.

7. **Finance Report**  The Chairman referred the Board to the finance papers that had been sent to them.

a. The Chairman invited Mrs Emslie, the Association Finance Officer, to update the Board. Mrs Emslie briefed the Board that the Association had been subject to a virtual audit this year owing to Covid-19 restrictions. The audit had been completed successfully but it had not been without its challenges. Mrs Emslie also thanked the Finance Advisory Committee for all their hard work in scrutinizing the financial affairs of the Association.

b. The Chairman asked Commander MacTaggart to update the Board on the FAC report, which is attached at Annex I and he briefed the Board that:

(1) A management letter had been issued that had highlighted the paucity in funding to support statutory and mandatory maintenance tasks.

(2) He had made the recommendation that ‘Streamlining of Risk Management’ should be considered at the next Board Workshop.

c. The Chairman invited Mrs Emslieto update the Board on the other papers they had been sent. Mrs Emslie briefed the Board that:

(1) **Financial Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2020** Members had been sent a copy of the Financial Return which is attached at Annex J. The Chairman just asked the Board to note the contents which they did.

(2) **Budget and Expenditure as at 31 May 2020** Board Members had been sent a copy of the Forecast of Outturn which is attached at Annex K. The Chairman just asked the Board to note the contents which they did. The Chairman ask the Board to note that although the Association’s core running costs had been approved for 2020/21 we may be asked to consider cuts to in-year costs as a consequence of the Government’s Covid-19 response.

(3) **Regionally Generated Income** **Spend** The Board had been given a copy of the tables of Additional Spend 2019/20 (Final) and of Additional Spend 2020/21 (as at 16 June 2020) and they are attached at Annexes L and M respectively. Mrs Emslie asked the Board to note that:

(a) The underspend in NDR relief would be carried forward to undertake more cadet hut refurbishments in 2020/21.

(b) The underspend in RGI would be carried forward and ring-fenced for improvement works to reserve centre social / public areas.

(c) There had been a downturn in AV income as a consequence of the Covid-19 lock-down and we were looking at a significant drop in income in 2020/21.

d. **Unit Grants** The table of unit grants as at 16 February 2020 had been sent to Members and is attached at Annex N. The Chairman asked the Board to note that no new bids have been received, given the current difficulty in forecasting activity. The Board were asked to consider those grants that had been made to units at the December 2019 meeting and which had not been spent owing to the restrictions on training as a consequence of the Covid-19 lock-down. **The Board agreed that those funds which remained unspent should be returned to the Association unless the unit could demonstrate that the commitment remained and would be undertaken sometime in 2020.**

f. **Authorisation of Signatories** The Chairman asked the Board to authorise the new Chief Executive as a signatory for cheques, dispositions, standard securities and leases for 2020/21. A briefing note had been sent to Board Members and is attached at Annex O. **The Board agreed to authorise the Chief Executive as a signatory for cheques, dispositions, standard securities and leases for 2020/21.**

8. **Association Matters**

a. **Lowland RFCA Management Plan** The Chief Executive briefed the Board that the Lowland RFCA Management Plan had been uploaded to the Board Members’ Area of the Lowland RFCA website. There was nothing of particular importance to bring to the Board’s attention and the Board were asked to approve the Plan. **The Board approved the Lowland RFCA Management Plan for 2020/21.**

b. **Lowland RFCA Risk Register** The Risk Register had also been uploaded to the Board Members’ Area of the Lowland RFCA website. This would be revised once the immediate impacts of the COVID19 pandemic were better understood. **It was suggested that the process of streamlining the risk management process could be looked at by the FAC and recommendations brought back to the Board, and the Board agreed to this proposal.**

9. **Any Other Business** There was one item of AOB brought to the Board by Lt Col Robertson. He suggested that as schools in Scotland were now facing significant challenges in delivering education to students as a consequence of social distancing the Association should consider sub-letting its Reserve Centres to Education Scotland if they were in need of additional training space. The Board considered this proposal and agreed that:

a. The Association may face considerable insurance costs in the era of Covid-19 and these costs would need to be taken into account.

b. If such requests were made then we should see what we could do to accommodate Education Scotland.

10. **Next Meetings**

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| a. | Board: | 24 September, 10 December, 18 February |
| b. | Chairmen’s’ Committee: | TBC |

Annexes:

A. Update on RNR Matters

B. Update on Army Reserve and 51 Infantry Brigade Matters.

C. Update on RAuxAF Matters..

D. Chief Executive’s Report.

E. Business Update on Accommodation and Works.

F. Business Update on Engagement.

G. Update on SCC Matters

H. Update on ATC Matters

I. Finance Advisory Committee Report.

J. Financial Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2020.

K. Budget and Expenditure (Statement of Outturn) as at 31 May 2020.

L. Table of Regionally Generated Income Spend 2019/20 (Final).

M. Table of Regionally Generated Income Spend 2020/21.

N. Lowland RFCA Unit Grants as at 16 February 2020.

O. Briefing Note on Chief Executive as a Signatory for Cheques, Dispositions, Standard Securities and Leases for 2020/21.