

LOWLAND RFCA 23/24 ANNUAL REPORT



CONNECTING DEFENCE
WITH SOCIETY

CHAIR'S REPORT

Captain Andrew Cowan RD RNR



Defence is seldom out of the news these days. Armed conflict, or the potential for it, seems more pervasive than ever before. Ships of the Royal Navy are protecting global shipping from Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Typhoons of the Royal Air Force are in action against Houthi military facilities in Yemen. The Army has trained more than 34,000 Ukrainian recruits here in the UK since June 2022. 900 British personnel are in the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) as part of NATO's 'Enhanced Forward Presence.' As I write, 20,000 British personnel are deployed across Europe on NATO's Exercise STEADFAST DEFENDER. British uniforms can be found across Africa, the Middle East and the Far

East. And where there are British uniforms, there are Lowland Reservists. We are also seeing an increasingly assertive government in China and internal instability in Iran. As the Foreign Secretary, Lord Cameron, said earlier this year:

'It is hard to think of a time when there has been so much danger and insecurity and instability in the world. The lights are absolutely flashing red on the global dashboard and what we need at that [sic] time is strong leadership and a plan and that is what we have with the Prime Minister and the team in place.'

In his annual RUSI Lecture on 13 December 2023, the Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, concluded:

'A host of long simmering conflicts are coming to the boil. The world is responding. We are on the right path. But when we think a little further ahead we need to check whether our collective response matches the urgency and gravity of the threats.'

Most would agree that the first duty of any Government is to safeguard its people against external aggression. And if Mark Twain was right when he said, 'History does not repeat itself, but it often rhymes,' then we ought to see an increase in Defence spending. Before the First World War, Defence spending was at a steady 3.15% of GDP but had soared to 47% by 1919. By 1936, Defence spending was at 2.9% but rocketed to 52% by 1945. It has been in decline ever since: 7% in 1959; 6% in 1968; 5% in 1987; and 3% in 1997. In 2023-24, the UK Government spent £341bn on 'social protection' (£124bn goes on the State Pension alone), £245bn on Health, £131bn on Education, £116bn on debt interest . . . and £68bn on Defence.

Since Grant Shapps took over from Ben Wallace as Minister of Defence in August 2023, he has twice called for an increase in military spending: in January 2024 to 2.5% of GDP and then in March 2024 to 3% of GDP. Following the Budget of 6 March, the Government's website announced that 'Defence spending is expected to hit 2.3% of GDP next year after £11 billion investment announced at Spring Budget 2023.' Some way off the Minister's aspirations and certainly lower than Defence spending in the days of appeasement in 1936.

As we go live with this report, the Prime Minister has just announced £75 billion of new Defence funding that will take the Defence budget to 2.5% by the start of 2030. £10 billion would be used to 'put the UK's own defence industry on a war footing.' We are told that all of this will make Britain 'by far the largest defence power in Europe.' Funding, of course, is only part of the solution.

We - the Council of RFCAs and the 13 RFCAs - can, as Lord Haldane intended, make our case for the Reserves. We do so through the External Scrutiny Team's Annual Report as well as by challenging Service Chiefs at CRFCA's Annual Conference. The External Scrutiny Team's reports are hard-hitting as this extract from last year's report demonstrates:

'Last year we concluded there was a real risk of a tangible decline in the health, and thus capability, of our Reserve unless there was a coordinated approach to ensuring there was a clarity of purpose for all personnel and units, combined with demanding training, appropriate scales of equipment and sufficient logistical and administrative support. In addition to the ongoing failings of the recruiting system the manning figures suggest this equation is not in balance, so this risk continues.'

It is, of course, the Government's business to determine how our taxes are best apportioned. Nor is more funding necessarily always the right answer; sometimes we can be more efficient and effective when we are forced to be so. We also appreciate that the Minister of Defence and the Chief of Defence Staff are constantly making the case to Cabinet colleagues and Treasury for resources to match the national need. Ultimately, we in Defence can only make best use of the funds that we actually receive and we must ensure that every single penny is used to best effect. Furthermore, we must also, in the words of the Duke of Wellington (1806),

'... conceive it to be [our] duty to serve, with unhesitating zeal and cheerfulness, when and wherever the King or his government may think proper to employ [us].'



Unsurprisingly, managing our resources has been challenging. While inflation now seems to be under control, 'unknown unknowns' such as the remedial works required on the Volunteer Estate following the MOD's fire protection surveys and the work to identify and 'make good' buildings with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), present new challenges which must clearly be addressed but with no additional funding from the Centre. On top of all that, the Estates Team is readying for the transition to Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) when Mitie take on Hard Facilities Management. Incidentally, this is to be very warmly welcomed but I will leave the cheerleading to the Chief Executive. Generally, however, it will be evident that there is no such thing as 'normal jogging' for our Estates Team.

In a similar vein, funding for our Engagement Team was not confirmed until September, 6 months into the Financial Year. Unnerving though this was, our Engagement Team progressed, planned and prepared as best they could and delivered, amongst many other things, a superlative Silver MOD Employer Recognition Scheme Awards event in early October at the Kelvingrove Museum followed by glittering Gold Awards at Edinburgh Castle later the same month. The Comms Team have been just as successful in so many areas but I would highlight once again the Cadet Adult Recognition Awards (the CARAs) in September and their deployment in February to Operation TOSCA in Cyprus to cover 71 Engineer Regiment on UN peacekeeping duties. These initiatives serve to demonstrate the talent and sense of purpose of all our staff.

On the Cadets and Youth front, we need look no further than Professor Denny's latest report: 'What is the Impact of the Cadet Forces in Scotland?'. Commissioned by us and Highland RFCA, the report was published in July to great acclaim. For over 10,000 people, these impacts range from more positive outcomes in education to health and wellbeing and from employability to lifetime earning potential. Not to mention the benefits to the Scottish Government through facilitating the achievement of their policy objectives such as the Attainment Challenge. For those involved in the Cadets, the findings of this report will contain few surprises. For those new to the Cadet organisations, the report provides ample evidence as to the value of the Cadet Forces in Scotland.

As you read through this Report, I am confident that you will share the Board's view that our staff at Lowland House and in our three Army Cadet Force Battalions are making the very best possible use of the funds that we receive. I cannot speak for everyone's 'zeal and cheerfulness' but I would judge the majority to be in good heart. As ever, I remain extremely grateful to all our staff for all that they do. They will need to be even more resourceful this coming year. I must also thank you, our Association Members (and our ever growing social media followership), for all that you do in supporting our Reservists and Cadets. In turn, we know that they make our Nation better and stronger.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our Annual Association Meeting on 16 May at Edinburgh Napier University's Sighthill Campus.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Colonel Ted Shields MBE DL



Introduction

Following the strategic and operational context that our Chair has provided, it falls to me to report on the various business outputs that we have been required to deliver over the year and to assess, as far as is possible, our effectiveness.

While there have been a number of frustrations and challenges throughout the year, I am pleased to report that there have also been some terrific achievements. Inevitably, we have been bemused, in these times of significant international tension, at the apparent lack of urgency in regenerating our Reserve Forces. Professor Gary Sheffield spelt out the

logic in an essay he wrote for the [UK Reserve Forces' External Scrutiny Team's Annual Statutory Report for 2023](#):

'A study of early twentieth century history shows that the UK's Reserve Forces had three important roles: as a deterrent; as reinforcements for Regular Forces; and as a means of mobilising society for war.'

Today, for example, the Army Reserve is established for 30,100. Its trained strength was actually 24,183 as at 1 April 2023 so (-) 18% what it should be. In March 1939 the Secretary of State for War announced plans to increase the size of the Territorial Army from 130,000 to 340,000 and to double the size of the TA divisions.

But, of late, there have been some encouraging signs of regeneration. The Army's new Director Reserves, Maj Gen The Lord Lancaster, in an interview given to Forces TV at the end of March 2024, said:

'We recognise that we've moved away from a Global War on Terror to perhaps greater state competition, and the demand signal for the Reserve is changing. And I think it's clear it's to be able to deliver a war fighting organisation that can support the Army . . . we haven't always been certain what we want the Reserve for and now I think there's complete clarity.'

Director Reserves then set out his vision for the Strategic Reserve (ex-Regulars and ex-Reservists). He said that they would be 'actively managed,' made 'an interesting offer' and funded differently because 'it's about joining a credible organisation . . . guaranteeing that they will receive relevant training . . . in units which don't change their role every 2 to 3 years . . . suitably resourced and have the appropriate equipment.'



Illustration: National Army Museum: 'Scotland For Ever!', Recruiting Poster 1938

All this has yet to translate into anything tangible in Lowland RFCA but it is just the fillip we had been hoping for, if not expecting. We have kept the faith and we stand ready to support these vital initiatives. Time and again, as Professor Sheffield has pointed out, our Reserve Forces deter aggressors, reinforce the Regular Force and help mobilise society.

Estates

Turning to our business outputs, I will first consider Estates. As many of you know, the resources to maintain and sustain our Volunteer Estate have been insufficient for many years. It was perhaps ever thus as The Times military correspondent expounded in 1908:

'The County Associations inherited the existing Volunteer drill halls and premises but many of the buildings were in such a dilapidated condition, were in the wrong place for the new companies and batteries or were hired on such complicated terms and leases that numerous legal and financial difficulties had to be resolved before some units could establish themselves in their headquarters with a degree of legal security.'

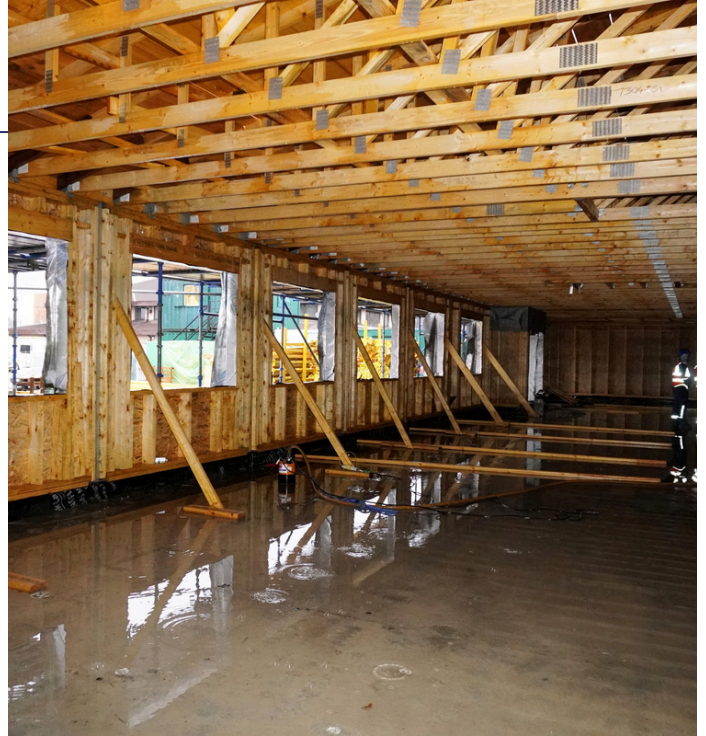
I therefore pay tribute to Alistair Forsyth, his two Area Works Officers and the rest of his dedicated team who continue to maintain and keep safe 345 buildings on 132 sites across 7,500 square miles of Lowland territory. Every single one of those buildings needs at least some attention. The Estates Team is constantly up against competing priorities – health and safety issues, decrepit buildings, broken heating systems – and naturally frustrated 'customers.' And then the 'unknown unknowns' strike: the MOD's Fire Protection Surveys identified 32 sites in Lowland which required urgent attention. All sites with sleeping accommodation had to close, each survey reviewed, suitable mitigations agreed and then remedial work costed, tendered and awarded. Then along came RAAC. The problem had been identified back in 2021 but came to a head in September when a concrete beam - which showed no sign of being unsafe – collapsed in a school in England. Every one of our 345 buildings had to be assessed. The Estates Team managed to eliminate 271 sites from their investigations, leaving 74 to hone in on. Inspections by specialist structural engineers confirmed three affected sites, the worst of which is Seaforth Road in Ayr.

Future Defence Infrastructure Services

Running simultaneously has been all the work behind the Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) Value for Money Study. This concluded that adopting the Built Estate (i.e. the Regular estate) arrangements would provide the opportunity to transform the approach to maintaining the Volunteer Estate, while also ensuring statutory and mandatory compliance and providing a safer place for Reserves and Cadets to work and train. It also allows for the strategic alignment of the Volunteer Estate with the wider MOD estate, generating a 'one Defence Estate' ethos. Benefits of the Built Estate contracts include:

- A move from the current 'fix on fail' approach to preventative maintenance and evidence-based investment decisions.
- Adoption of industry best practice maintenance standards.
- An improvement in Health and Safety compliance.
- A higher level of investment in the maintenance of the Volunteer Estate.
- Improved Information Technology to inform and manage Facilities Management on the Volunteer Estate to ensure investment decisions are more data driven.

The 13 RFCAs will align with the four Built Estate regions with an In Service Date of 1 August 2024. Our contractor is Mitie. Workshops, visits and workstream meetings as far away as London, Birmingham and Cambridge have been keeping us all busy. Mobilisation is now underway. The Estates team are restructuring, retraining and two additional staff are to be recruited by 1 August. Complex and legally binding documentation must be prepared and handed over to Mitie. We are convinced that this new arrangement will provide a better service – because it is better resourced – for our Reservists and Cadets. Furthermore, Mitie are proving to be pro-active, responsive and constructive.



With all these competing priorities and no uplift in year to the resources allocated, we have not been able to deliver all that we would have wished this year. Some projects have had to be postponed as the cost of construction materials has risen and new sustainability targets and project requirements have emerged. There have, however, been some notable successes such as the new facility for 278 (Lowland) Battery, Royal Artillery at Livingston. The Battery will soon have their own offices, training spaces and storage facilities. We are confident that better times are ahead.

Alternative Venues

Working closely with the Estates Team but under the direction of the Deputy Chief Executive is our Alternative Venues Officer, Denise Reagan. Alternative Venues is the initiative by which we offer up our Reserve Centres and Cadet sites for commercial use when they are not needed for military or Cadet use. Thus 'Regionally Generated Income' (RGI) is accrued for the Board to disburse in accordance with the priorities of the day. Having weathered the austere years of the pandemic, Alternative Venues goes from strength to strength thanks to Denise's exceptional talent for 'sales', her commercial acumen and her tenacity. Income being generated by Alternative Venues and therefore being ploughed back into our Reserve Forces and Cadet organisations has never been better. On your behalf, I sincerely thank Denise for her outstanding contribution to Lowland RFCA.



Engagement and Communications

Turning to Engagement and Communications, they too have had more than their fair share of hard work and battles for resources. Financial certainty was not assured until September, making the business of planning events worthy of our Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence somewhat risky. But, as those members of the Association who attended will testify, Colin Vooght and his team delivered a Silver Awards event at the Kelvingrove Museum that would have been hard to better. But better it they did at the Gold Awards at Edinburgh Castle. Such events reflect as well on Lowland RFCA as they do on Defence. Meanwhile, the Employer Engagement team's pursuit of signatories for the Armed Forces Covenant and the Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards has been relentless with some spectacular business networking events such as that at Trump Turnberry in late March.

The challenge we face is how to best manage this growing band of supporters, with no additional resource in the offing. The MOD reports that 10,000 Regular personnel, 4,000 Reservists and nearly 4,000 civilians are employed in Scotland and that therefore 'Defence is one of the biggest employers in Scotland.' NHS Scotland employs 160,000 people so is nearly 10 times the size. In 2019, Tesco's employed 30,000 people in Scotland. So the number of employees is not necessarily an indicator of standing and influence, not least since technology enables greater output but with fewer people.

It is, then, more about capability, reach and prestige, no more powerfully demonstrated than by the aircraft carriers, 3 Commando Brigade training in Norway, Quick Reaction Alert Typhoons at RAF Lossiemouth or Scottish Reservists deployed on UN peacekeeping operations in Cyprus. Connecting those who so loyally support Defence to those who deliver our Defence is fraught with challenges – security issues of course but also finding the time in the busy schedules of both parties. A formal dinner at Edinburgh Castle is one thing, a visit to HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH quite another. Both activities have their place but more of the latter is what makes Defence such a powerful proposition to our network of employers.

Our Comms Team continues to go from strength to strength as [Lowland Quarterly](#) and the regular bulletins on social media demonstrate. Kate Johnston, so ably supported by Emma McMullan, breaks new ground every year. This year's deployment to Cyprus to cover 71 Engineer Regiment on Operation TOSCA must be a first for an RFCA. It was an ideal opportunity to fanfare the operational work of our Reservists to their employers and society more widely. The video message from the Commanding Officer in Cyprus and the Lord-Lieutenant of Renfrewshire at an Awards ceremony in Paisley in March was just one example of initiative and innovation. I am delighted that the Comms Team have developed such a good working relationship with the British Forces Broadcasting Service to the extent that interviews, 'audio postcards' and the like are now re-broadcast wherever British Forces are serving. The CARAs are ever popular, this year's Awards being filmed at Sandhurst alongside Jordan Wylie, the ACF Ambassador and former soldier, author, extreme adventurer and star of Channel 4's 'Hunted.'

Cadets and Youth

As our Chair highlights in his report, Professor Denny's report on the impact of the Cadet Forces in Scotland could not have provided more powerful testimony as to their value to the Nation. Commissioned by us and Highland RFCA, the report was circulated wide and far. For some, 'yesterday's news is tomorrow's fish and chip paper,' but for our Professional Support Staff (PSS), Cadet Force Adult Volunteers,

parents/guardians/carers and the Cadets themselves the report provides – and will continue to provide – the hard evidence that demonstrates the compelling benefits of the Cadet movement.

The most critical aspect of being a member of the PSS or a Volunteer with the Cadets is that of safeguarding. We all understand why we need to keep those in our charge safe. For the Army Cadet Force, an Army Cadet Safeguarding Hub has been established at HQ Regional Command in Aldershot. I pay tribute to our outgoing Deputy Chief Executive, Elaine Ferguson, for all that she has done to help inform those responsible for this Hub, especially with regard to Scottish law and policy. I must also thank Elaine for all that she did to ensure the continued delivery of SQA qualifications within the syllabi of the Army Cadet Force and the RAF Air Cadets. Again, we operate slightly differently in Scotland – one size does not always fit all – which is why Elaine’s advocacy and input has been so critical.

Despite the funding challenges, the ongoing effort required to keep the Cadet sites safe and compliant and the never-ending battles to find venues for Summer Camps, our PSS in the three Lowland battalions of the Army Cadet Force continue to go that extra mile for the Cadets. It was ever thus and may occasionally be taken for granted by the Army’s chain of command. Once again, Elaine has championed their cause. We now very warmly welcome Elaine’s successor, David Pettigrew, as Deputy Chief Executive and lead for Cadets and Youth. We wish him every possible success. Not for the first time, I pay tribute to our Cadet Executive Officers, the Cadet Quartermasters and other members of the PSS for all that they do to turn their Commandants’ plans into action. Scotland is the better for their dedication, devotion, diligence and determination.

Business Support Services

Absolutely none of this would be possible without the unwavering support of Angela Emslie and her team in



PhotoThree Credit: SGT K Carr, 661 VGS

Finance and Admin. In these straitened times, keeping us all straight on our finances and delivering all our business support needs has never been so vital. Doing more with less has never been quite so pertinent as it is today. And there can never be any room for error. I was delighted that our longest serving staff member, Grace Hood, was recognised for her service with an invitation to the Royal Garden Party last year. That Grace and her husband were presented to HRH The Princess Royal was the icing on the cake. Grace is also to be presented with the Lord-Lieutenant's Certificate for Meritorious Service by the Lord Provost of Glasgow in a ceremony at the City Chambers.

In Conclusion

In conclusion, it is my firm belief that we, Lowland RFCA, remain relevant, add value and operate adroitly with the minimum of fuss. This is our mantra and it is our actions that speak so loudly for themselves. In so many ways, we are little different to our forebears 110 years ago:

'Only those who have studied their reports and proceedings can begin to appreciate the immense amount of work which has been done by these bodies [the County Associations], with the one object of securing the safety of the realm, so far as in them lies. Haunted as they may be by fears as to the inadequacy of funds, and faced by the ever-present necessity of obtaining recruits, the work already achieved reflects the utmost credit on the Associations and their Secretaries, and if at times a feeling of resentment is entertained at the delays of official procedure, or at some desire to impose on the Associations duties incongruous with the primary object for which they were formed, or at the inadequacy of the funds available, it is at all events to be hoped that these troubles are but transitory, and will soon be a mere matter of history.'^(*)

On your behalf, I thank all our staff for all that they do. I also thank you for all that you do to support our Reserve Forces in enabling their 'three important roles: as a deterrent; as reinforcements for Regular Forces; and as a means of mobilising society for war.' Your contribution today is as important as that of our forebears in 1914 and 1939.



^(*) P1 Territorial Force Handbook, 1910

CADETS AND YOUTH REPORT

David Pettigrew || Deputy Chief Executive



Cadets throughout the Lowlands have been making the most of every opportunity to learn and flourish, unceasing in their appetite for adventure and skills development. Much of this activity is driven by the Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and Professional Support Staff, who continue to provide an excellent service to our Cadets despite the ongoing budgetary and estate pressures.

Good news stories from the Cadet world are constantly highlighted by our social media channels and within the Lowland Quarterly, however, I would like to commend these three stories in particular:

1. [First Sea Lord Cadet from Dunbar](#)
2. [Max's Marvellous Medical Intervention](#)
3. [More than 50 Years of Service with the Royal Air Force Air Cadets](#)

Last year also saw the publication of Professor Simon Denny's report, ['What is the Impact of the Cadet Forces in Scotland?'](#) This exciting research, commissioned by the Lowland and Highland RFCAs, concluded: 'The Cadet Forces are uniformed volunteer youth movements that benefit nearly all their participants, both young people and adults.'

Importantly, the study also considered whether the taxpayer-funded Cadet programme is value for money. Convinced that this is the case, the report finishes: 'It is not possible to definitively calculate the exact value of these impacts and the return on investment produced by the Cadet Forces in Scotland... However, where calculations of financial return can be carried out based on models produced by HM Government and others, their sum is vastly more than the annual cost of the Cadet Forces in Scotland. Spending c. £17 million a year of Ministry of Defence funding on the Scottish Cadet Forces is an excellent use of taxpayers' money.'

These remarkable insights should be an encouragement and motivation to all involved in delivering the Cadet programme.

Organisation	CFAVs	Cadets	Duke of Edinburgh Awards
Army Cadet Force	451	1854	Bronze - 74 Silver - 21 Gold - 0
RAF Air Cadets	234	1155	Bronze - 24 Silver - 8 Gold - 1
Sea Cadets	318	583	Bronze - 17 Silver - 3 Gold - 4

ENGAGEMENT REPORT

Colin Vooght || Head of Engagement



23/24 was not the easiest of years for the Engagement team, with significant financial restrictions in line with most government departments. However, with innovation and determination, the Engagement team has had a productive year, with increased Employer Engagement statistics and an ever-growing digital audience.

Whilst we lost our annual trip to Norway and saw a reduction in additional events we could stage, the Employer Engagement team used this lull to their advantage; for example, our customer database is far better than last year. The Regional Employer Engagement Directors (REEDs) have been able to spend a great deal more time in one-to-one meetings, the fruit of which can be seen in the statistics below.

Like last year we combined the [Silver Employer Recognition Scheme \(ERS\) Awards](#) with the Association’s autumn meeting, allowing fabulous networking opportunities for both our members and Employer network. This sort of hybrid event superbly champions our ‘Network of Networks’.

Our tried and tested format for the [Gold ERS Awards](#) at Edinburgh Castle delivered once again, giving our Advocacy and Strategy group the opportunity to amplify their influence amongst our new Gold ERS holders.

Year	AFC	Silver ERS	Gold ERS
2020	210	57	12
2021	255	44 (*)	18
2022	314	110	26
2023	381	110	32
2024	454	61	50

(*) Employers must sign an AFC and achieve Bronze and Silver ERS awards before receiving the Gold award. Therefore, Bronze becomes Silver, which then becomes Gold.

Table shows AFC and ERS recipients

Many Scottish Reservists from 71 Engineer Regiment were mobilised to Cyprus to take part in [Operation TOSCA](#), the United Nations' peacekeeping tour. Whilst the Army was unable to resource an employer visit to the island, the Lowland Board funded a Comms team media tour. Collaborating with the Regiment, Corps and Deputy Commander Field Army, the team produced a raft of content, which was used widely across Army channels. [Click here to read the full report.](#)

The Comms team have worked closely with Employers, Reserve Units, the Cadets and the rest of the RFCA to produce excellent publicity and marketing. This continues to enhance not just our reputation but also that of our stakeholders, most notably the single Services.

Growth in Followers	How many followers we've gained across all five of our social media channels.	878
Growth Rate	A % measurement of how many new followers we have in relation to our total audience.	4%
Impressions	The amount of times content is displayed on social media feeds.	632,085
Engagements	The total number of interactions on our content including: likes, shares/retweets, links clicked etc.	28,665
Engagement Rate	A % measurement of how much our audience interact with our content.	8%
Video Views	The number of times our videos have been viewed across all five our social media channels.	372,114

Table shows social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter) statistics for 23/24

Our social media has grown where it matters this year, seeing a huge growth in video views, nearly 900 new followers and above average engagement rates. We adopted short form videos (reels/shorts) in 2023 which have been incredibly fruitful and led to a few viral (by RFCA standards) videos.

The Lowland RFCA website hit 49,000 page views this year, proving itself to be a useful tool for keeping our membership and network informed and equipped. We published 54 website articles and were featured in or contributed to thirteen press releases.

The number of Lord-Lieutenant Certificates for Meritorious Service continues to increase. Whilst most of the COVID-19 backlog has been cleared, some remain outstanding. A few Lord-Lieutenant Cadets are still to be presented in Lieutenancy areas which have hardly any Defence involvement. These events continue to be unique opportunities to seamlessly connect Defence with society.

Despite the uncertainty of 23/24's funding, we've continued to move forward, undeterred by that outside of our control. Whilst our budgets remain tight, the financial outlook for 24/25 is at least clear, having already received our budgets for this financial year.

ESTATES REPORT

Alistair Forsyth || Head of Estates



The Lowland Estates team continues to manage reactive and compliance works on a daily basis. Our nine members of staff fall into three categories: Compliance, Hard Facilities Management (FM) and Soft FM. This new organisational structure helps us to more effectively deliver a safe, functional and compliant estate for the Reservists and Cadets.

As of 1 August 2024 we will switch from 'Deliver and Assurance' to 'Assurance' only. The delivery of Hard FM will be carried out by Mitie, the UK's leading Facilities Management firm. This will include Planned Maintenance, Statutory Mandatory Inspection and Testing, Reactive Maintenance and Project Works.

23/24 saw the Estates team work on FDIS transition as well as projects such as 603 Squadron (Learmonth Terrace) damp proof and ventilation works, continued work on the Glasgow & Strathclyde University Officers' Training Corps (GSUOTC) project and beginning the delivery of the Livingston Army Reserve Centre for 278 Battery.

Spending for 23/24 is detailed below:

Grounds Maintenance (grass cutting, weeds, trees and vegetation)	Soft FM	£138k
Reactive Maintenance (fault reports and works orders)	Hard FM	£992k
Statutory Mandatory Inspection and Testing	Hard FM (Compliance)	£1,031m
Completed Projects	Hard FM (Billable Works)	£2,209m
Total		£4,372m

Table shows Estates spend for 23/24

2158

In 23/24 the Estates team processed 2158 faults. On average that is 8 per working day. Faults might include pest control or boiler breakdowns.

4519

Additionally, 4519 Statutory Mandatory Inspection Tests were carried out across the estate. This equates to 17 per working day, all of which have to be organised, managed and paid for.



A total of 5 boilers were replaced across the estate due to failure.



£310k was spent on gas remedial works.



3 EV (electric vehicle) chargers were installed.



Photographs show the exciting building project at Livingston.

BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES REPORT

Angela Emslie || Head of Finance and HR Lead

Business Support Services plays a crucial role in ensuring the smooth functioning of any organisation. At Lowland House, the BSS team operates behind-the-scenes, ensuring that the operational machinery runs seamlessly. The team consists of five dedicated individuals who work diligently to ensure that the administrative, financial, and human resource needs of Lowland RFCA are met efficiently. While their contributions may not always be as visible as those of other departments, they are integral to the overall success of the organisation.

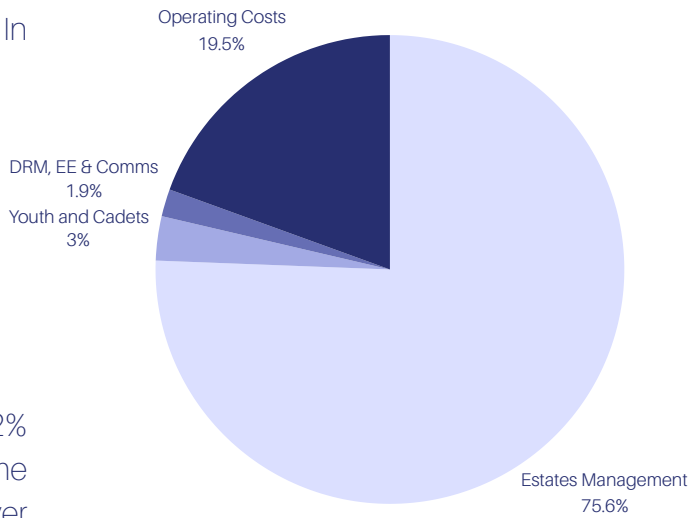
This fiscal year presented many challenges that necessitated cost-saving measures, with funding remaining flat. Despite this, the team demonstrated resilience and adaptability, ensuring that essential functions were maintained without compromising on quality.

The Council of RFCAs and the MOD determine how much funding Lowland RFCA receives. In 23/24 we received:

Budget 23/24	£6,695m
Uplift to Budget In-Year	£2,488m
Advance Brought Forward (money brought over from 22/23 for projects and purchases that span financial years)	£1,803m
Total Budget	£10,986m

How we spend this funding is determined by our SLAs. In 23/24 the allocation for spending was:

- Estates Management - £8,306m
- Youth and Cadets - £335k
- DRM (Defence Relationship Management), Engagement and Communications - £207k
- Operating Costs - £2,138m



Notably, the Estates Management budget increased by 32% for Capital Projects. The largest in-year investment came from the Army for the new ARC in Livingston, spanning over two financial years.

Our audited accounts will be available from 31 May 24.