



Isle of Man
Government

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Chief Secretary's Office

Summary of Responses to the Consultation on

An Armed Forces Community Covenant for the Isle of Man

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The consultation on an Armed Forces Community Covenant for the Isle of Man, which took place between 29 August 2012 and 12 October 2012, sought to obtain on behalf of Government the views of the Manx public concerning the introduction of a Community Covenant, which would be an official declaration of recognition and support for those Island residents who serve, or have served, in the British Armed Forces.

2.0 Background

2.1 In 2010 the UK Government published a formal statement of its commitment to the Armed Forces in the form of an 'Armed Forces Covenant'. The Armed Forces Covenant recognises the sacrifices made by all Armed Forces personnel past and present and acknowledges the moral obligation of society to them and to their families. The Covenant states that those serving in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, or those who have served in the past "should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services". The Covenant defines the Armed Forces Community as "including all those towards whom the Nation has a moral obligation due to Service in HM Armed Forces". The Covenant itself is not established in statute although there is a requirement in the Armed Forces Act 2011 for the Secretary of State to prepare a report on the Covenant each calendar year, to be laid before Parliament.

2.2 The Armed Forces Covenant is "An enduring Covenant between the People of the United Kingdom, Her Majesty's Government and all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown and their families". The commitment is made on behalf of the people of the United Kingdom to those serving in the Armed Forces of the Crown and it applies to Manx service personnel in the British Armed Forces and to Manx veterans as it does to those in the UK. It is estimated that there are over 200 people from the Isle of Man serving in the regular Armed Forces and about 65 in the Reserves. The Isle of Man War Pensions Committee which disburses pensions

paid by the UK to Manx war pensioners and war widows estimates that there are approximately 3,500 veterans in the Isle of Man.

- 2.3 The Armed Forces Covenant is underpinned by 'Community Covenants' which are voluntary statements of mutual support between a civilian population and the Armed Forces Community in the area. Community Covenants provide a framework to encourage representatives from a region, including local councils, the charitable and community sectors, the civilian community and the Armed Forces community of an area to work together. An Armed Forces Covenant for the Isle of Man would therefore be an official declaration of recognition and support for those Island residents who serve, or have served, in the British Armed Forces and reflect the close and continuing relationship between the Island and the Armed Forces community.

3.0 Content of this Report

- 3.1 This report includes a summary of the responses received in respect of this consultation; it reproduces information and comments from submissions relating to the consultation. A few other matters relating to support for veterans and currently serving members of the Armed Forces were raised by consultees and these are also included at 5.3 (Question 8).

4.0 Scope of the Consultation

- 4.1 The consultation commenced on the 29 August 2012 for a period of 6 weeks, until the 12 October 2012.
- 4.2 Consultees included Tynwald Members, the Attorney General, Local Authorities, Chief Officers of Government Departments, Boards and Offices, members of the public, Armed Services Organisations, the Chamber of Commerce, the Isle of Man Trades Unions Council and the Law Society. The consultation was promoted via a press release and notification in the local press and the documents placed on the consultation page of the Chief Secretary's Office website. There was newspaper and radio coverage of the consultation. A press release and notice were issued late in October to remind the public that the period for responding to the consultation was closing.

A total of 49 **responses** were received as follows;

Members of the Public	12
Companies	0
Government Departments, Boards and Offices ¹	19
Local Authorities	10
Tynwald Members	2
Armed Forces Organisations	6
TOTAL	49

A full list of respondees is included at Appendix I

5.0 The Responses

- 5.1 Of the responses received 94% were either generally or strongly in favour of establishing an Armed Forces Covenant. A number of the responses, whilst supportive, expressed reservations regarding 'positive discrimination'.
- 5.2 Prior to the public consultation, the Chief Secretary's Office conducted an internal consultation with Government Departments on behalf of the Council of Ministers. On 12 March 2012 a letter was sent to all Government Departments, Boards and Offices asking for their views on an Armed Forces Community Covenant. There was a very high rate of response, which was almost entirely positive; a few reservations were expressed however concerning issues, again around 'positive discrimination' and also the potential cost implications. A further consultation took place on 4 June 2012 in respect of the draft of the Community Covenant, there was very little comment received in respect of the content of the draft. The views of the Government Departments have been incorporated into this consultation report.
- 5.3 The consultation document asked a number of specific questions and the responses received to each of those questions are summarised below as follows;

Q1. Would you like to see an Armed Forces Community Covenant introduced for the Isle of Man? It would be helpful if you could explain why you feel a Community Covenant should be introduced or not.

¹ Please see 5.2 for further explanation concerning responses from Government Departments

The response to this question was overwhelmingly supportive of a Community Covenant with comments that this was a welcome move, commendable, that it should be fully endorsed and that it would be a “demonstration of faith and recognition from Government” and “raise awareness and commitment to fair treatment of service personnel”. Three respondents were specifically not in favour, giving various reasons including that joining the Armed Forces was no longer compulsory as there is no conscription and that it should be treated as just another job; they should not be “given special treatment”. One respondent felt that as the Armed Forces have a political context in the UK the Covenant is therefore a political document and that it would strengthen the ties between the IOM and the UK; references were also made to controversy surrounding the UKs recent military campaigns and to potential costs of introducing a Covenant.

Q2. Do you have any views concerning the measures identified in Section 4 of the draft Community Covenant attached at Appendix 1? If you do, please explain.

Section 4 concerns the measures to which the IOM Government will be committing. It was generally felt that the measures were clear and to the point and although a lot of these measures were already in place it would be helpful to highlight them. There were some reservations expressed concerning a lack of new commitments and the need for clear policies to be put in place. One consultee felt that a Community Covenant should provide an opportunity “to strengthen arrangements in the IOM as with UK Local Authorities” in respect of housing for injured service personnel or bereaved military families. The response from the IOM Joint Ex-Service Association (JESA) made a number of specific suggestions including the need to focus on welfare and employment and to develop a full Public Private Partnership arrangement between Government and the Service Charities.

Q3. Do you have views concerning any other part of the draft Community Covenant? If so, please explain.

A number of respondees felt that it was felt important to stress that the purpose of the Community Covenant was to prevent disadvantage and not to create positive discrimination. Some specific proposals were put forward concerning leave for Cadet Force adult volunteers to undertake IOM Cadet Force activities, care for injured service personnel, travel to the IOM for returning service personnel on leave and 'residency' status whilst serving with the Armed Forces. Suggestions were also made concerning a web page link to bring together military and civilian community contacts.

Q4. If you are a service provider e.g. a local authority, charity or community organisation, do you currently provide any services for serving or retired Armed Forces personnel, their families and/or the bereaved? If yes, please specify.

The Manx Legion reported that they provided a social club and associated benefits to serving and ex-services personnel. The response from JESA highlighted that their members (including the Manx Legion) provided a very wide range of personal and financial support to serving and ex-service personnel and their families. The responses from Government bodies indicated that a number have measures in place to ensure that services personnel are not disadvantaged, for example:

- The Civil Service allow special leave for reservists.
- The Department of Health works with the Health Services in the UK to ensure continuity of care for serving Armed Forces personnel and veterans.
- The Department of Social Care ensure that qualifying members of the Armed Forces are not disadvantaged with regard to housing waiting lists during deployment. SAFFA are provided with nominated Housing Units.
- War Pensioners are entitled to priority medical treatment, if that treatment is for their pensioned disablement.
- The Isle of Man Post Office has special arrangements in place for members of HM Forces at British Forces PO addresses to receive mail and packages from the Island.
- Manx National Heritage work closely with the Royal British Legion; the iMuseum has public events for Remembrance Day and hosts the work of the War Memorials

Committee. Later this year all the names on any Manx War Memorial will be available online.

Q5. What do you consider would be the potential impact of a Community Covenant for your organisation (where relevant) and/or the Isle of Man? Please be specific and if you have any concerns, suggest where possible what might be done to address these.

The impact of introducing a Community Covenant was generally considered to be positive in that it would for example raise awareness of past and present Manx military service, strengthen military memory and provide the work of military charities with more exposure; one comment expressed the hope that it would encourage more children to join the Cadets. There were comments made about potential cost with some concerned that additional costs would be incurred by Government and others concerned that Government was not intending to commit additional resources in these areas but that it should. Overall it was felt that a Community Covenant would have a positive impact in highlighting the problems faced by serving personnel and veterans.

Q6. If the Government determines that it wishes to establish an Armed Force Community Covenant for the Isle of Man, the Government and the senior Army commander for the Isle of Man (on behalf of all the Services), will be signatories. Should other organisations be invited to become signatories to the Covenant to represent the Isle of Man community? If yes please specify which organisation/s, giving brief reasons.

There were differing views on this point; a number felt that the Isle of Man Government was the appropriate body to sign the Community Covenant on behalf of the Island's community; other organisations could then be asked to record their commitment to the principles set out in the document. Other suggestions included: signatures from a suitable umbrella group representing third and private sector organisations; the Manx Legion Club as the Senior Serviceman's Club; and representatives from each military organisation including nominated cadets to witness the signing. One respondent noted that allowing signatories from other organisations might help with wider engagement on the Covenant.

Q7. Do you have any views concerning how the commitments made in an Armed Forces Community Covenant should be monitored and supported? If so, please explain.

There was some support for the idea of an Armed Forces Champion who would report to Tynwald; views were also expressed on how the Covenant should be monitored and supported. Comments received included:

- The Covenant should be monitored by an individual appointed on a voluntary basis with exceptions being dealt with by the Department of Social Care.
- An independent body should be appointed to audit the Covenant and make recommendations.
- It should be reviewed annually by a body including military and civilian community organisations and a report made to Tynwald.
- The Chief Secretary's Office should work with an informal advisory Committee with representation from the main charitable associations and 42 NW Brigade and chaired by an MHK
- The Covenant should be embodied in Manx law and reviewed annually with a Ministerial report to Tynwald.
- An Armed Forces Champion should be appointed to report to Government and the report published on the Government website.

There was a suggestion that a public questionnaire should inform the process.

Q8. If you have any other comments that you wish to make in respect of any aspect of this consultation on an Isle of Man Armed Forces Community Covenant, please provide them.

Comments included:

- There is currently not enough information available to veterans.
- Government should work to dispel the minority view that service in the British Armed Forces is in some way serving a foreign power, this is defamatory and damaging to morale.

- The newly formed IOM Health and Care Association may take an interest in services provided to Forces personnel.
- Access to local authority housing by the children of serving or former Manx service personnel needs consideration
- Armed Forces criteria should be included for returning Island forces/ex forces personnel i.e. for housing waiting lists
- Improved forms to accommodate details of Military Service when accessing housing, benefits, employment services etc.
- Needs to be clearer how the Government will engage with the private and third sector on the Island
- Needs to be made clear whether the commitment to a Covenant will be from an individual e.g. the President of Tynwald or through a Resolution of Tynwald
- It is essential to support serving personnel with travel costs from UK to IOM.
- More support is needed for adult Cadet Force volunteers from employers re. Special leave.
- Former Service personnel should be given preference for public sector housing and first time buyer list.
- Accurate statistics on veterans and serving personnel would be useful to gain an accurate picture of the service community.
- Will retired veterans resident on the Island be treated equally with regard to the pension supplement?
- A 'Veterans Isle of Man Booklet' should be produced (a 'UK Veterans Booklet' already exists).

A comment was also made that in parts of the UK the covenant has been extended to cover those who served in 'blue light' services e.g. the Police, Ambulance Services, Coastguard, Civil Defence, Fire Service outside of their home area, to recognise the unusual hazards and degree of selfless public service which these groups share with members of the Armed Forces.

6.0 Policy Matters

- 6.1 The Covenant is not intended to be a statutory document and will not of itself change government policy. Although one respondent asked that the Covenant be enshrined in law, it is not a statutory document in the UK and nor can it be in the

Isle of Man. It is for Departments of the Government to determine policy, taking into account all factors, including the resources available. Policies with wide ranging implications are considered by the Council of Ministers. An Armed Forces Community Covenant will not alter the existing decision making processes in respect of policy.

7.0 Framework

7.1 Further consideration by the Council of Ministers will be required to determine how a Covenant might most effectively support members of the Armed Forces community in the Isle of Man and how this might be monitored. The views and suggestions from the consultation will be taken into account, including:

- Making information on existing support and services more readily available to currently serving and ex- services personnel.
- Promoting the relationship between the IOM Government and the Armed Services in a positive way.
- Collecting accurate and up to date statistics on the service community.
- Appointing an Armed Forces Champion to report back to Government.
- Including representatives from the main charities and military organisations on a reporting committee.

8.0 Costs and Impact Assessments

8.1 There will be no direct cost implications in the establishment of an Armed Forces Community Covenant. Officer and political time have been involved in the consultation process and there will need to be some ongoing commitments from the public and potentially private and third sector organisations if the introduction of a Community Covenant is agreed. In particular consideration will need to be given as stated in 7.0 above for responsibility for co-ordination, monitoring and reporting. As for the impact of a Community Covenant, it is anticipated that this will be positive in that public, private and third sector organisations will be encouraged to come together to enable it to work effectively and efficiently in the Isle of Man.

9.0 Comments and Next Steps

9.1 The Chief Secretary's Office is giving full and careful consideration to the comments received; there is no guarantee that changes will be made as a result of any one

particular comment. Once this review has concluded recommendations will be made to the Council of Ministers.

- 9.2 The Chief Secretary's Office is grateful to all those who responded to the consultation. A copy of the consultation and the summary of responses will be available in the 'Closed consultations and summaries' section of the Consultations page on the Isle of Man Government website.
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LIST OF RESPONDENTS

Local Authorities

Andreas Parish Commissioners
Ballaugh Parish Commissioners
Douglas Borough Council
Jurby Parish Commissioners
Lonan Parish Commissioners
Marown Parish Commissioners
Patrick Parish Commissioners
Peel Town Commissioners
Ramsey Town Commissioners
Rushen Parish Commissioners

Members of the Public

Karen Forrest
Walter Gilbey
Alex Hall
Mr and Mrs Jackson
Andrew Jessopp
Bill Lawrence
Margo
Eddie McMahon
Scott Mellor
George Noble
Ray Regan
Neil Stewart

Tynwald Members

Bill Henderson
Tony Wild

Armed Forces Organisations

Armed Forces Network
Army Cadets IOM

Isle of Man Joint Ex-Service Association²
Manx Legion Club
RAF Air Cadets IOM
Royal British Legion

IOM Government

Department of Community, Culture and Leisure
Department of Economic Development
Department of Education and Children
Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture
Department of Health
Department of Home Affairs
Department of Infrastructure
Department of Social Care
Chief Secretary's Office
Office of Fair Trading
Office of Human Resources
Treasury
Communications Commission
General Registry
Insurance and Pensions Authority
IOM Water and Sewerage Authority
Manx National Heritage
Manx Electricity Authority
Post Office
Veteran's Welfare Service

² A joint response from a JESA meeting Chaired by Colonel Charles Wilson and attended by representatives from the following organisations: Royal Artillery Association; SSAFA; Manx Legion Club; RAMC Association; IOM ACF; War Pensions Committee; The Royal British Legion; RASC/RT Association; Aden Veterans Association; Army Benevolent Fund – The Soldier's Charity.

Consultation Criteria

The Six Consultation Criteria

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 6 weeks for a minimum of one written consultation at least once during the development of the legislation or policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your Department's effectiveness at consultation.
6. Ensure your consultation follows best practice, including carrying out an Impact Assessment if appropriate.