

Minister visits government funded veterans support hub in Wales

Woody's Lodge was awarded £35,000 by the government through the Afghanistan Veterans' Fund, to support Welsh veterans impacted by the Afghanistan withdrawal. The grant is being used to increase awareness of the service that they provide and maintain their support team across Wales. The grant has also funded extended home visits for veterans to help them adjust to daily life.

Woody's Lodge was Inspired by the late Paul "Woody" Woodland, who lost his life in service. Paul realised that living in green spaces would support positive mental and physical health, and this has been replicated through the creation of Woody's Lodge in the south Wales countryside.

The charity provides safe indoor and outdoor spaces and activities for veterans to re-establish connections and talk about problems they face.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Steve Barclay said:

It was great to visit Woody's Lodge in South Wales today to hear about the amazing work they do with veterans to help provide expert advice and support to them and their families.

I want the UK to be the best place in the world to be a veteran and that means ensuring we give those who have proudly served our country to keep us all safe the support they expect and deserve.

The charity also acts as a referral pathway for NHS Wales, and has hosted over 20,000 veterans socially through its farm hubs and drop-in centres.

Joined by Alun Cairns MP and the Secretary for State for Wales, the Minister met with CEO Graham Jones and Chairman David Trotman, to find out more about how the charity has supported veterans during difficult times such as the Afghanistan withdrawal and the recent anniversary of the Falklands conflict.

The Minister then went on to see a presentation on their Memory Lane app and games, which they have developed for veterans on what they call 'memory Mondays'. The theme for Mental Health Awareness Week this year is loneliness. Woody's has been integral in preventing isolation in veterans of all ages – the charity has dedicated social events for veterans with dementia to socialise, and regular events for veterans and their families.

Secretary of State for Wales, Simon Hart said:

We are immensely proud of our veteran community in Wales and recognise that ex-service men and women may need extra support. It was a pleasure to meet and congratulate the staff at Woody's Lodge

who do such incredible work.

And I was especially pleased to talk to some veterans about their own personal experiences and the help they have received.

CEO of Woody's Lodge Graham Jones said:

Woody's is delighted to welcome The Government's Chief of Staff, Stephen Barclay, as well as Secretary of State for Wales, Simon Hart and our local MP and supporter Alun Cairns.

This visit will enable us to present The Charity's work in supporting the Armed Forces Community as well as those from the Emergency Services and their wider families.

It is a great opportunity for our Veterans to meet and talk to our visitors today, about their experiences during their Service Careers and about their lives following this and how Woody's supports them and their families.

Veterans Commissioner for Wales Colonel James Phillips said:

The Veteran's community forms an important part of Welsh society. Our ex-servicemen and women and their families deserve access to high quality support and I am delighted Woody's Lodge will be able to grow and further assist communities throughout Wales following receipt of the UK Government grant.