

Reserves Day 2020: stepping up to protect the UK

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace thanked the nation's Reserves for their commitment. He said:

Today is Reserves Day and I personally thank the 35000 reservists supporting our Armed Forces, balancing civilian life with a military career.

Some 2000 stepped up to support the fight against coronavirus recently, displaying commitment, discipline and selfless dedication. An admirable feat and one which highlights the sheer versatility of our Armed Forces.

Reservists from the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force have shared their stories:

Louise Tunnicliff, Army Reservist

"I am a Civil Servant, completing my final year of the Fast Stream in the Department for International Trade. In my spare time I am also an officer in the Army Reserves serving with 68 (Inns of Court and City Yeomanry) Signal Squadron, 71 (City of London) Yeomanry Signal Regiment based in Central London."

"During the COVID-19 outbreak, the Army decided to mobilise certain Reserve elements and my Regiment quickly released a call for individuals who were not considered key workers and who would like to volunteer."

"Following a quick turnaround, I was mobilised at the start of April to command a troop of 27 Reserve soldiers from across my Regiment to support 1 Signal Regiments efforts in the West Midlands area. This experience required me to adapt my leadership approach to the challenge of bringing together individuals from different squadrons, to get to know each other and organise ourselves all via virtual platforms."

"It has been phenomenal to see the determination and spirit of people coming together from across society and all walks of life to help the most vulnerable, those affected by the virus and their families."

Ross Ewing, Royal Navy Reservist

SLT Ewing on the deck of HMS Queen Elizabeth

"I joined the Royal Naval Reserve in my first year at the University of St

Andrews, having previously been a member of the RAF Air Cadets. The RNR was a fantastic way to do something different while studying at university. It gave me the opportunity to travel, train, stay fit, acquire valuable skills and earn money all in one go. I am extremely proud to serve in the Royal Navy part-time.”

“I am currently mobilised as a submarine advisory team (SAT) watchkeeper aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth. My main role is to facilitate the safe and effective operation of a submarine in support of the UK Carrier Strike Group (UKCSG).”

“For me the best thing about the Reserves is the range of diverse opportunities on offer. In my short career I have supported national exercises involving submarines, delivered training to new recruits, travelled to France, Gibraltar and Belgium and been mobilised in support of the UK Carrier Strike Group. I have also developed my leadership and management skills and am now responsible for the delivery of initial naval training at HMS Scotia.”

“I became an officer at the age of 18, and I think one of the biggest challenges for me was proving that – despite my age – I could be an effective leader and team player. I would encourage anyone interested in joining the Reserves to kick-start their application and get involved. The more you put in, the more you get out.”

Polly Moore, RAF Reservist

Polly enjoys the “cool factor” of activities like flying gliders

“Prior to joining the Reserves, I wouldn’t even give eye contact to anyone. I am now, however, far more confident and eager to learn. The Reserves pushes you in various elements such as leadership, confidence and organisational skill, and this in turn can help enhance you in your everyday life.”

“There is also the ‘cool’ factor! Coming from a somewhat ‘nerdy’ childhood, the ability to say I have shot a rifle, flown a glider, camped out in the woods, socialised with Canadian Soldiers in France, Nordic-skied up a mountain larger than Ben Nevis, certainly piques the interest of those I talk to!”

“I am very proud to be part of an organisation that I believe is truly a force for good in the world. I also enjoy the camaraderie within our Squadron – Reserves are a mix of many individuals from different backgrounds.”

Reserves of Faith: Royal Navy Chaplain

Simon Chapman is a Chaplain at a UK boarding school by day, a Chaplain with the Royal Navy in his spare time and is now mobilised with the coronavirus effort.

Working with servicemen and women in the Royal Navy brings different challenges to working in a school.

“My skill as a vicar has been greatly enhanced by the training and experience that I have received in the Armed Forces.”

“The great part about being a member of the Royal Navy is that I never feel that I am on my own. When I encounter a situation with an individual that is complex, I can immediately call on the assistance of medical staff, mental health professionals, welfare support workers and the individual’s chain of command.”

Simon has had a diverse career: he acted as a Chaplain in Afghanistan during Herrick, where he held a weekly Church of England service, ran the Easter services, and vigils and repatriation services in times of tragedy. Being able to travel with the troops in Afghanistan and assist in a range of roles, has been the marker of a career that is never the same two days in a row.

Inside the Red Zone: Royal Navy medic tackling coronavirus

Midshipman Christopher Storer’s badge shows what he looks like beneath the PPE

Hon. Midshipman Christopher Storer is a Royal Navy medical bursar studying medicine at Brighton & Sussex Medical School. Since teaching stopped due to lockdown, he has been working as a Healthcare Assistant (HCA) in A&E in the Royal Sussex County Hospital.

“I’d just completed my second-year presentation in March, when we received the email telling us that the COVID-19 outbreak had been declared a pandemic, and that teaching was suspended immediately. I’d already been working at the Royal Sussex County Hospital for almost a year at that point and so as lockdown was announced I was able to immediately book in to work the next day.”

“In A&E, like the rest of the hospital, the facilities had been split into “red” and “green” zones – with red being the areas where Covid-positive patients were receiving treatment, and the green zones being protected areas which would be kept Covid-free.”

“By the end of March, the effects of lockdown had made the hospital significantly quieter. There was a constant sense that a tidal wave could hit at any moment. Nothing was left to chance, and staff were taking full advantage of the initial quiet to prepare. Extra training was provided to refresh skills, and within a couple of weeks I was able to work in the patient ambulatory triage, assisting the nurses by putting cannulas in, taking bloods and other tasks. It was a high-pressure, fast-moving environment but I felt incredibly well supported by the emergency department staff.”

“In April, with a good amount of experience working at the front of A&E, I

began working in the red zone. Areas were set up to put on the full PPE: a surgical gown, the tight-fitting masks, a visor and scrub caps. I remember feeling anxious the night before my first red zone shift– the name conjures up images of red lights and closed off wards, looking like something on a submarine from an old war movie. But the reality was nothing of the sort. While access in and out was highly restricted to prevent the spread of the virus, it was a normal hospital environment.”

“It was hard work, but there were so many morale-boosting moments working on the emergency department team. The local community really come together to support the NHS. We’d receive donated scrubs and knitted ear protectors to help with the sore marks you get from wearing the surgical masks daily. At the Easter weekend, we received over 200 donated Easter eggs. It seems like such a small thing, but to the staff working there it means so much.”

“Looking back, I feel incredibly privileged to have worked as part of the A&E nursing team providing frontline care to patients. I’m glad to have been able to play a small part in helping during the COVID-19 outbreak.”

[Pubs, restaurants and hairdressers to reopen from 4 July](#)

News story

Practical guidelines published to help restaurants, pubs and hairdressers reopen safely



Thousands of pubs, restaurants and hairdressers across England have been given practical, clear steps they can take to reopen safely over the coming weeks.

New Covid-19 secure guidance for the hospitality sector and hairdressers means businesses will be able to reopen in England from 4 July, provided they meet government criteria for keeping staff and customers as safe as possible.

Working alongside over 300 key industry stakeholders and trade unions, the government has developed clear plans in line with scientific advice and public health directions, building on existing guidance published on 11 May. The new guidance sets out a range of measures for pubs and restaurants to become Covid-19 secure, including:

- requiring use of table service where possible instead of ordering at the bar and assigning a single staff member per table
- encouraging use of contactless ordering from tables where available, such as through an app
- discouraging non-essential trips by staff within venues, such as between the kitchen and front of house, by using radios and other electronic devices to communicate
- encouraging customers to use hand sanitiser or handwashing facilities as they enter the venue
- providing clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene as people arrive on the premises, with signage and visual aids

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

We know this pandemic has been particularly hard for people working in hairdressing and hospitality. Allowing pubs, restaurants and hairdressers to open will be another step in our plan to kickstart our economic recovery in a safe manner.

The guidance we have set out provides clear, practical steps businesses can take to open in a way that is as safe as possible for workers and customers.

Separate guidance has been published for hairdressers, which states that a clear visor should be worn by the person providing the service, covering the face and providing a barrier between the wearer and the customer from respiratory droplets caused by sneezing, coughing or speaking.

The government is also consulting with industry on how businesses should record customer information to help keep customers and employees safe and support the new test and trace system.

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[**British Ambassador welcomes donation**](#)

to fight covid 19 in Guatemala

World news story

Donation by British company AstraZeneca will help Guatemalan health system to cope with the emergency.



Nick Whittingham, British Ambassador and Jorge Luis Calderon, from AstraZeneca

The British Ambassador, Nick Whittingham, has welcomed news that AstraZeneca is donating personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies and quick covid 19 tests to the Guatemalan Government.

The donation from AstraZeneca consists of:

- 1,500 KN95 masks
- 400 insulation gowns
- 3,000 latex gloves
- 500 quick tests of covid 19

Donation will be made to the CONRED for immediate distribution and use in the Guatemalan health system. The company is also making similar contributions to other countries in Central America and the Caribbean.

British Ambassador to Guatemala, Nick Witthingham, said:

We are pleased to see AstraZeneca's vast experience coming to help the Guatemalan health system. The United Kingdom's scientific community is leading the way in battling covid and we want to share these advancements with the world and Guatemala.

AstraZeneca is a global pharmaceutical company with a major UK presence. It works with governments, policy makers and regulatory bodies around the world to ensure that patients can access innovative medicines when they need them.

The company is also prioritizing a covid 19 vaccine, which was originally developed by Oxford University scientists, who are now working with AstraZeneca on development and production.

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[Westferry Printworks: letters to HCLG Select Committee](#)

Letters from the Secretary of State to the Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee responding to the Chair's letter of 16 June 2020.

The letter of 19 June responds to questions from the Chair of the Select Committee and commits to a further more detailed response regarding the Westferry Printworks planning decision.

The letter of 24 June sets out detailed responses to questions and requests for documents relating to the planning decision regarding Westferry Printworks.

The information release sets out relevant associated documents and communications. It focuses on the time period between the date of closure of the inquiry on 9 September 2019 and the date of Secretary of State's decision on 14 January 2020. It has been redacted for personal data and legally privileged information.

The Secretary of State's Decision Letter and the Inspector's Report are available – [Recovered appeal: land at former Westferry Printworks site, 235 Westferry Road, London \(ref: 3225474 – 14 January 2020\)](#)

The inquiry documents listed on pp. 146-153 of the Inspector's Report are publicly available on application to PCC@communities.gov.uk.

[UK and Welsh governments team up on big broadband boost for rural Wales](#)

- Value of broadband vouchers doubled in Wales to help level up rural communities

- 50,000 rural homes and businesses in Wales are eligible to apply for topped up vouchers
- The vouchers subsidise the costs of installing next-generation, gigabit-capable broadband

Residents and businesses will from today have access to more funding for better broadband, as the Welsh Government “tops up” the UK Government’s Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

The scheme helps people with funding to cover the upfront costs of installing new gigabit-capable internet connections.

Vouchers worth up to £3,500 for rural SMEs and up to £1,500 for rural residential premises have been available in Wales since May 2019.

But, due to the Welsh topography, it’s proving more expensive for industry to roll out the infrastructure to some of the harder to reach areas of the country. The Welsh Government is now working with the UK Government to provide an additional £3,500 for SMEs and £1,500 for homes.

This means that the maximum funding available through each voucher has doubled and is now £7,000 for SMEs and £3,000 for residential premises.

The vouchers subsidise the cost of building out next-generation broadband infrastructure – such as fibre-optic cables – to rural villages and towns, so they don’t miss out on much faster speeds. They also incentivise other broadband companies to build in these areas.

Ministers from both governments are now urging Welsh businesses and communities to apply for these vouchers so they can future-proof their internet connections and be ready to reap all the economic and social benefits brought by new advances in technology.

Matt Warman, UK Government Minister for Digital Infrastructure, said:

Our £1.8 billion superfast broadband programme transformed Wales’ digital landscape, allowing many people to work remotely during lockdown.

We are now focusing on future-proofing internet networks with gigabit speeds and, working with the Welsh Government, I am pleased to offer even more vital funding to bring this next-generation connectivity to rural businesses and homes.

I encourage all those who qualify to apply to feel the benefits of much faster internet connections.

Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport Lee Waters said:

Fast, reliable internet is vital for our communities, as the

covid-19 outbreak has highlighted. Following our Superfast Cymru programme 95 per cent of premises in Wales can access faster broadband, and we need to look at innovative ways to reach the final five per cent.

We are pleased to provide this top up for the UK Government's scheme which takes into account the challenges of reaching some premises in rural areas. I would urge communities and businesses to explore the options these vouchers will offer so they can access some of the fastest speeds available.

Gigabit-capable broadband enables internet download speeds of up to 1,000 megabits per second (mbps). Current superfast speeds are 30 mbps.

This next-generation connectivity has the potential to revolutionise rural communities and make them more attractive places to live. This will give people the freedom to live and work more flexibly and help develop thriving digital economies.

The UK Government is committed to delivering nationwide gigabit capable broadband as soon as possible, with the ambition to deliver it by 2025.

Before its gigabit voucher scheme, the UK Government's Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme helped more than 40,000 small businesses to achieve a superfast broadband connection from 2013 to 2015.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme is a UK-wide, supplier-led scheme offering vouchers used as part of a group project, to pay towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband to premises, i.e., homes and businesses, providing speeds of over 1,000 Mbps or 1 Gbps. Beneficiaries do not have to take those speeds and pay only for what they want to use, knowing they can increase them over time. Anyone who is interested uses a postcode checker to find registered suppliers in their area. Their chosen supplier will guide them through the application. For more information and to check eligibility visit: <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>
- The Welsh Government also provided top up funding for the first phase of the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme that was designed to encourage broadband service providers to build full-fibre networks in the UK for small to medium-sized businesses and nearby residents when part of a group scheme. The £67m fund was successfully used over two years and has now closed for new applications. Any premises in Wales that were issued vouchers with the top-up allowance prior to the close-down date of 14 May 2020 will still receive their funding.