

New £300-million contract paves the way for Veterans UK digital transformation

News story

The way many of Veterans UK services are delivered is to be digitised as part of a new contract worth £300-million that successfully commenced on 1 June 2020.



The Veterans UK logo. MOD Crown Copyright 2020.

The 7 year contract will enable Veterans UK and other parts of our parent organisation, MOD Defence Business Services (DBS), to transform the way we deliver military personnel pay and administration, veterans pensions and related services. Working closely with the new the supplier, Shared Services Connected Limited (SSCL), we will deliver a range of digitally-enabled services that supports digital transformation across our services.

Some of the benefits the new contract will bring are:

- providing an enhanced Veterans Portal and modern channels of access including new digital and interactive platforms such as online claiming
- our back-office systems will be replaced allowing us to deliver pensions and compensation services in a more accessible, digitally enhanced way.

Andy Dowds, Head of Veterans UK said:

We are all eagerly awaiting the Transformation that this new contract with SSCL will bring to Veterans UK. We have a brilliant opportunity to truly move our Veterans services into the digital

age, providing easy access for customers and staff alike.

We are starting from a low technological base and will move quickly through to a fully digital service. There is much hard work to do but I know that our people and SSCL staff are ready to rise to the challenge.

Our plans will take several years to deliver but we are starting work straight away. In the meantime, please be reassured that all Veterans UK's services and payments will continue as normal and please continue to contact us via the usual contact points.

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[Bridging payments for stewardship agreements complete](#)

News story

Over 3,800 bridging payments were made to farmers and land managers in May 2020



English countryside

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has confirmed that more than 3,800 bridging payments worth around £43 million have been made to farmers and land managers.

On 28 April the government announced that, in recognition of the disruption to cash flow for rural businesses caused by coronavirus, eligible farmers and

land managers would be offered bridging payments (interest-free loans) for 75% of the current estimated value for unpaid 2019 revenue claims on their stewardship agreements.

Over the past month, payments have been made to all eligible outstanding claimants, meeting the RPA's commitment to complete bridging payments by the end of May.

The loans covered Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship 2019 payments, ensuring farmers and land managers are paid for the important work they do to protect the environment.

RPA Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

I am pleased to announce that we have issued all bridging payments to unpaid Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship claims.

We know this is a challenging period for farmers and we will continue to focus on completing the remaining work on these claims to ensure land managers are paid as quickly as possible.

If any adjustments need to be made to their final revenue payment, once processing work has been completed, the RPA will write to those customers informing them of what action will need to be taken.

Through CS and ES agreements, farmers and land managers are provided with an additional income stream for delivering environmental benefits, including providing habitats for wildlife and reducing the risk of flooding by improving farm infrastructure.

Those signed up to agri-environment schemes this year will be well-placed to participate in the new Environmental Land Management scheme

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[April 2020 Price Paid Data](#)

Press release

HM Land Registry Price Paid Data tracks land and property sales in England and Wales submitted to us for registration.



Please note, due to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on HM Land Registry operations, the figures for April 2020 should not be used as an accurate marker of activity in the land and property market. We apologise for any inconvenience; this data will be updated in future months.

[Access the full dataset](#)

There is a time difference between the sale of a property and its registration at HM Land Registry.

In the dataset you can find the date of sale for each property, its full address and sale price, its category (residential or commercial) and type (detached, semi-detached, terraced, flat or maisonette and other), whether or not it is new build and whether it is freehold or leasehold.

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[**Social Security Advisory Committee \(SSAC\) appointments**](#)

The Minister for Work and Pensions, the Baroness Deborah Stedman-Scott OBE DL, has appointed Kayley Hignell to the Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC).

In addition, existing member Grainne McKeever has been re-appointed to the Committee for a second term; and Jim McCormick's current appointment has been extended to October 2020.

Confirming the appointments, Baroness Stedman-Scott said:

“I am delighted to appoint Kayley to the Social Security Advisory Committee. Her expertise and experience will enrich further the advice that the Committee provides to the DWP ministerial team. I am also pleased that SSAC will be able to continue to draw on the expert contributions of Grainne and Jim”.

Liz Sayce, SSAC interim Chair, said:

“Kayley is a very welcome addition to the Committee. She will bring excellent knowledge and insight to our work on a broad range of issues that affect many people in our society who find themselves in vulnerable situations. I look forward to working with her.

I am also delighted that Grainne and Jim’s terms have been extended. Both have made strong contributions to our work over the past few years, bringing important insight from Northern Ireland and Scotland into our work. It is very good news that we will continue to benefit from their input.”

About the Committee

The Social Security Advisory Committee is an independent statutory body established in 1980. It provides advice to the Secretary of State on proposals for the amendment of secondary legislation and on general social security matters.

The Commissioner for Public Appointments regulates all appointments made by the Secretary of State to SSAC. All such appointments are made in accordance with the Code of Practice published by the Commissioner. The code is based on 3 core principles – merit, openness and fairness.

SSAC members receive a daily fee of £256.80, for a time commitment of 2 to 3 days a month.

Business interests

Kayley Hignell

- Citizens Advice, Head of Policy for Families, Welfare and Work.

Kayley will take up her 5 year appointment on 1 June 2020.

Dr Jim McCormick

- Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Associate Director for Scotland; Chair of the independent Disability and Carers Benefits advisory group reporting to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security in the Scottish Government; and chair of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission.

Jim’s terms have been extended to 31 October 2020.

Professor Grainne McKeever

- Professor of Law and Social Justice at Ulster University; and former executive director of the Law Centre, Northern Ireland (2001 to 2020).

Grainne has been reappointed to 31 May 2024.

Social Security Advisory Committee
7th Floor Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Email: ssac@ssac.gov.uk

Denise Whitehead, Committee Secretary 020 7829 3354

[Third Future Accommodation Model \(FAM\) pilot takes off in RAF Wittering](#)

News story

The FAM pilot is now live across all three services after the third FAM pilot site launched at RAF Wittering.



FAM a new accommodation policy that gives choice to service personnel over where, how and with whom they live. MOD Crown Copyright 2020.

FAM is a new accommodation policy that gives more choice to service personnel over where, how and with whom they live.

Under FAM, service personnel as well as their partners, spouses, and families

can take the opportunity to choose to live in a way that better suits their needs and lifestyle, with help from the MOD.

Chief of Staff Personnel and Air Secretary, Air Vice-Marshal Maria Byford QHD:

The way our people live and work is changing and our accommodation provision needs to reflect this, giving more choice to Service personnel and their families. FAM aims to better support the workforce of the future irrespective of their relationship status or rank, letting our people choose where, how and with whom they want to live their lives.

The launch of the pilot at RAF Wittering will give us the opportunity to understand how we might do that best, listening to the feedback from our service personnel and their families to shape an accommodation offer that is fit for purpose.

Through the pilot, service personnel can get financial help to either make use of the private rental sector or buy a property of their own. The existing options of Single Living Accommodation or Service Family Accommodation are also still available.

The tri-service initiative has previously successfully launched pilot sites at Aldershot Garrison in early 2020 and at HMNB Clyde in 2019.

[The first service personnel on FAM video](#)

The pilot will run for around 3 years. FAM leads will test the policy and work closely with service personnel to see how they respond. A decision will then be made about whether to expand FAM and roll it out to the rest of the UK over the following decade.

Find out more on the [FAM GOV.UK page](#).

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