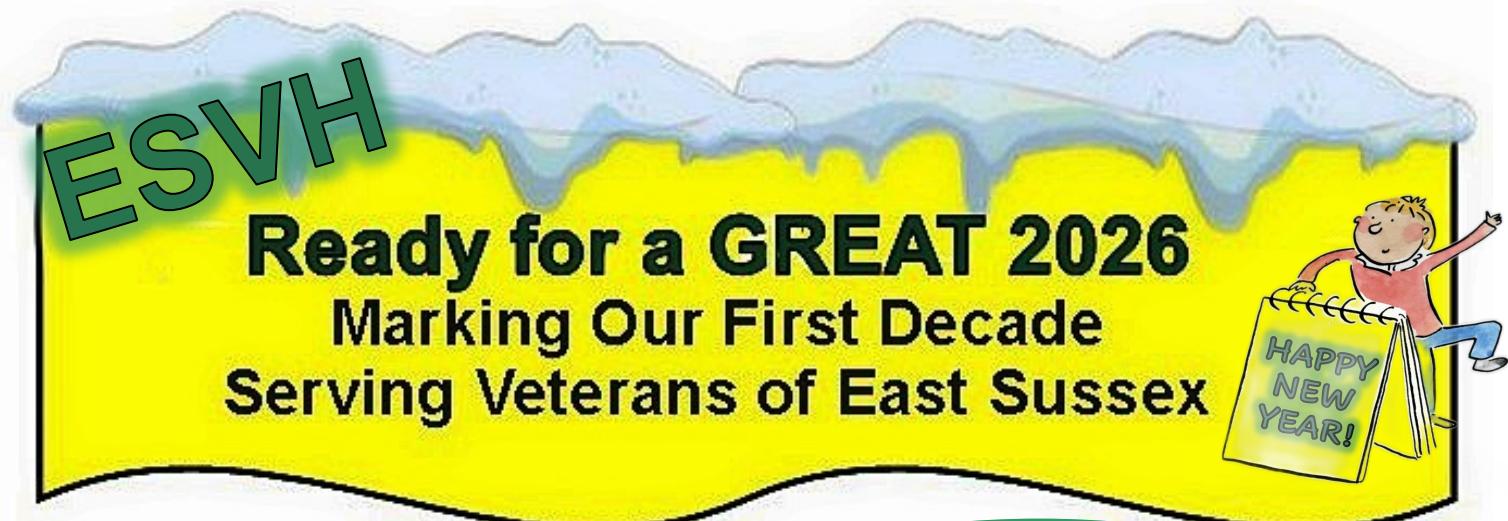




THE WARRIOR

VOL. 6.1

East Sussex Veterans' Hub Bulletin for the Armed Forces Community in East Sussex



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RBL
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
Rye & Pett Level
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Thameslink

A big thank you
for all your support.

During 2025

Royal Marines Association Eastbourne

OpCOURAGE
NHS
The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

1880 SURVIVING CHRISTMAS
THE SILVER LADY FUND CHALLENGING POVERTY SINCE 1880

OPTIONS management

Stanmer Stone Works
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ARMED FORCES COVENANT

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VETERANS' FOUNDATION

BUTCHERS HOOK

Sussex Community Foundation

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"Serving the people of Bexhill for over 50 years"

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HVA Hastings Voluntary Action

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Change Grow Live

Michelle Floral Displays

THE NOT FORGOTTEN ASSOCIATION
From Comradeship To Challenge™

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THE POPPY FACTORY

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SMART Recovery

Forestry Commission

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Cobseo The Confederation of Service Charities

SO STANMER ORGANICS Woodcrafts

Rother District Council

Wealden District Council

Bexhill & District Veterans Association

Not Forgetting all those who kindly made donations to support our Veterans in East Sussex during 2025

Our Farewells to Two Old Friends They Will Always Be Remembered

It is with sadness that we report the passing of two of our volunteers who have shown great commitment in supporting veterans for many years. Their sudden deaths have impact on everyone who knew them and the valuable work they did.

It is their legacy that many veterans, and their families, will remember them and what they did to help them change their lives. We are all grateful for their tireless contribution and understanding.

All at ESVH send their sincere condolences to those left behind, friends and families. May Sue and Henry rest in eternal peace and in our memories.



**Sue Smith Metropolitan Police,
Welfare Officer Sussex Armed Forces Bikers (Sussex) &
Welfare Volunteer for ESVH**



Sue



**Bikers Escort &
Farewell**



ESVH Line the Route for Sue's Final Journey

**Henry Muddle
SSAFA & ESVH Service Provider
Matilda Removals**



Henry



Trusty 'Matilda'



On Yer Bike..... Trans-USA!

Corporal Josh Bruton of the Queen's Royal Hussars has just returned from cycling across the USA from Miami to San Diego to raise funds for the East Sussex Veterans Hub. At this time, donations are on track to reach £750, and it is hoped to increase that figure in the next month. This will help ESVH meet the costs of first response and provide some tools for their new workshop, opening in 2026.

Josh is about to join the veteran community, having served 11 years with his regiment, the Queen's Royal Hussars (QRH). This is the British Army's most senior armoured regiment, formed in 1993 by merging the Queen's Own Hussars and the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars, with a lineage tracing back to the 1680s. They are heavy armour experts, operating Challenger 2 tanks (soon Challenger 3), specialising in shock action, mobile assaults, and reconnaissance, serving on NATO deployments and historic campaigns like Afghanistan.



This trip covered around 3,200 miles. Josh completed it in 44 days! That's an average of 72 miles per day. His longest day covered 125 miles. During this time, Josh had 8 punctures, fell off his bike around 10 times (4 with injuries), experienced two attacks of heatstroke and one episode of hyperthermia at 0500 in the morning at a wayward



Presentation of Certificate of Thanks to Josh

location, where he managed to get help at an isolated gas station.

ESVH thanks to Josh, and the support of his family and siblings, a brother and sister, who both currently serve in the Royal Artillery.

Josh is now considering his next adventure. It is to climb the Three Peaks in Nepal sometime in October/November 2026. Watch this space.



VETERANS
FOUNDATION

The Veterans Foundation Support ESVH

The Stand Easy Coffee Stop Is being supported by the Veterans Foundation until 2027. This is made possible through their successful Veterans' Lottery.

VF's income is directed towards charities making change and saving the lives of British veterans in need.

For just £10 a month, you can now win a whopping tax-free £75,000!

Over 600 guaranteed prizes are up for grabs in every draw - including a £7,000 first prize.

What's more, if you scoop the rollover jackpot, you can now win up to a total of £75,000.

Each player will also receive a FREE membership to the Gourmet Society, where you can claim big discounts on meals out, day trips and even online shopping! Plus, you'll also receive your own unique Veterans' Lottery card.

To join, go to the Veterans Foundation website: www.veteransfoundation.org.uk

**YOUR SUPPORT
SAVES LIVES
THANK YOU**

2025, At-A-Glance

ESVH attracted over 1,400 visitors, including representatives from 48 other organisations, statutory bodies, and agencies during 2025.

VIP visits included the MP for Hastings & Rye, Hellena Dollimore MP; the Mayors of Hastings, Cllr Margi O'Callaghan and Councillor Becca Horn; the High Sheriff of East Sussex, Lucinda Fraser DL; and the Police Commissioner for Sussex, Katy Bourne OBE.

As a bonus, our MP, Hellena kindly invited the Executive Secretary to a Remembrance Week Reception at No 10 providing an opportunity to meet Ministers and other representatives from the national military community.



The Monday drop-in attracted 534 veterans over the period, averaging 14 attendees per session. External service providers included Help for Heroes, Walking with the Wounded, the Department of Work & Pensions, local GPs, CAB, ESRA, Belfour Beatty, Littlewoods Fencing Group, TRBL, AdFam, and other community services.

The Flight Simulator also played a significant role over the past year at both our old and new locations. The 24-hour Op Black Buck exercise raised almost £2,000 in donations! It is open weekly on Monday and Friday mornings for aspiring pilots. Booking an hour-long session avoids disappointment. Veterans attend FOC; others are asked for a donation.

The 99/100 Group welcomed 153 veterans during the period, averaging 10 attendees per event. ESVH continued to work closely with Operation Courage, the veterans' mental health team (NHS), which used the Hub premises for consultations and counselling. 15 referrals were made for clinical assessment and intervention, with over 20 sessions held at the Hub.

Rural Activities. The Eridge Farm location continued to offer individual service users an alternative experience away from their daily routine. This

programme, supported by the ESCC contract, enabled veterans to attend bushcraft courses, participate in team-building days, engage in woodland management, practise sculpture, woodcraft, and cooking in the field. Additionally, woodcraft days were held in Brighton until March 2025.

Move of Location. In addition to casework, the preparation, administration, and execution of the move to 45 Robertson Street, including the introduction of a veterans and community café, took up everyone's time and energy. The move was completed on 15 June 2025, and since then, the Hub has been in a state of reorganisation, while the Stand Easy Coffee Stop is under fast-track development. There remains a long way to go, but with the stalwart support of a relatively small team, objectives have been achieved to date.

ESVH were, for the first year, able to raise funds for the Royal British Legion, during Poppy Week and managed to collect £785.16, with the help of the US Jeep Re-enactment Team, who stayed with us for 8 days.



A special mention goes to our landlords, Daisy's Property Management, for their terrific goodwill and generosity, as well as for the Silver Lady Fund, which has helped ESVH with the move and offered further support for the new workshops in Hastings (2026). This is not to forget the Veterans Federation, which is funding part-time staff costs for the café until 2027.

The café's impact has demonstrated the benefits of 'high street' exposure for the Hub. Referrals have increased significantly since July, and many other groups and individuals are becoming 'regulars', enjoying Michael's cuisine and charm. Two Christmas lunches were laid on, one for ESVH families and the other for ESRA members and friends.



The Challenges for 2026

Life will never stand still. The need to reach and support veterans in need remains the No1 priority. This is achieved as ESVH will:

Continue developing the ESVH programme of activities and services to ensure they are appropriate and sustainable for veterans with complex needs.

Develop rural activities programmes, using veteran peer group leaders to assist in management.

Review new activity sites to establish a location nearer the Hub.

Create additional workshop facilities to bring activities closer to the Hub. These will continue to offer skills training and produce 'upcycled' items for sale, generating income for the charity.

Increase support for veterans and others during recovery, enhancing personal development to prepare for potential re-entry into employment. Collaborate with local employers to facilitate this.

Address succession planning for key appointments and the training of additional volunteer peer support workers.

Continue the Mental Health First Aid programme. Expand involvement with other military and community organisations, both local and national, to support veterans.

Maintain work with East Sussex County Council.

ESRA and CGL on co-occurrence issues (alcohol and substance misuse and mental health problems).

Improve support for homeless veterans by acquiring, adapting, and managing suitable 'sanctuary'-style accommodation, in partnership with the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, landlords, and local authorities.

Participate in local events to raise awareness and funds.

Sustain ongoing engagement, liaison, and collaboration with community groups benefiting veteran service users.

Seek further grant funding, donations, and revenue generating activities.

None of these services can rely solely upon goodwill, albeit there is a tremendous amount given by those mentioned on page 2, and others, who make donations to ESVH.

ESVH is ambitious. This requires ongoing financial support in the medium term, before reaching the goal of self sufficiency.

Your help is welcome and donations of any amount to ESVH may be made via our website at www.eastsussexveteranshub.co.uk

The Accommodation Project - Update

In September there was good news. ESVH had been shortlisted for Stage 2 of the grant funding process and assessment by the Covenant Trust Capital Development Fund.

The CTF reported on how we would meet their priority, stating that,

'This project will establish a dedicated supported housing centre for homeless veterans in Hastings, offering 14 flats with 24 beds and wraparound support for complex needs. Integrated with a veterans' café and hub, the facility enables a stable transition to independent living across East Sussex.

'It will meet the programme priorities of transitional homeless veteran housing and refurbishments that enhance and improve access to housing for veterans with disabilities.

'The project will deliver new affordable accommodation for homeless veterans, addressing a gap in local provision. The transition pathway supports veterans with physical, mental, and social challenges by addressing key areas of need. Residents will receive tailored support for up to 24 months, including training, psychoeducation, and help engaging with services like Op Courage and DWP.

The centre will also host on-site sessions with multiple statutory and charitable agencies. 'This project offers immediate, tailored support for homeless veterans struggling to engage with mainstream services due to mental health issues, military culture, or past experiences. By creating a psychologically informed, veteran-led environment, it fosters trust, reduces stigma, and promotes long-term recovery. The centre will empower individuals to rebuild their lives and rejoin their communities with dignity and purpose.

'The ESVH project is guided by a veteran-led ethos that promotes daily feedback, shared ownership, and continuous improvement. Service users have actively shaped the accommodation plans through regular consultations and updates. Their strong support reflects a clear demand for dedicated housing.'

Veterans also contribute directly to maintenance and planning, with many transitioning into volunteer and leadership roles. A resident management group will ensure continued engagement and accountability.'

Following this milestone, a planning application has been submitted to Hastings Borough Council, and the results are expected in the first quarter of 2026.

Immediate progress will rely on securing a significant grant from the Covenant Trust Capital Development Fund, to be announced by the end of March. The actual conversion of offices to flats will commence in April, with a completion date expected around the end of 2026.

ESVH, in close liaison with Daisy's Property Management Ltd., will manage this project whilst ESVH will also acquire furnishings and finalise an essential accredited support programme.



ESVH Programme of Activities January - March '26

Workshop. ESVH is currently negotiating a new workshop location in Hastings or St Leonards. Once this is agreed, it will require maximum support to get it operational. It will accommodate woodworking, furniture upcycling, creative arts, a cycle repair unit, and potentially a model-making space. It may be possible to establish a retail outlet to sell our goods, benefiting the respective club and offset overhead costs.

Model Club. In the meantime, the model club will meet on Friday mornings, as published, starting on **23 January in the Activity Room, Robertson Street.**

99/100 Group. This will commence on **17 January and run fortnightly thereafter. It will take place in the Activity Room, commencing at 10 am and continuing through to 12.30pm.** Subject to funding, ESVH hope to see Thrive Inside meditation sessions be reintroduced during the Spring.

Cycle Club. As mentioned above, the rehousing and maintenance of 20 bicycles to a new workshop should be possible in February. Details to follow.

Drop In. That will continue every Monday from 10 am. Karen will attend on the second Monday of each month to deal with pensions and MOD claims. DWP, H4H, and other agencies will attend monthly, but not necessarily on a scheduled basis.

Rural Activities. A site in Hole Park has been offered to ESVH, and it will be developed once the weather improves, probably **commencing late March or early April.**

Families Event. It is planned to hold a family event over the **Easter weekend, 3-6 April**, subject to interest.

One to Ones. Any veteran requiring help may come to or contact the Hub at any time to arrange a chat to see how we might assist them. There is no need to book an appointment, **just pop in the 'Stand Easy Coffee Stop' or call our contact number 07884263824.** If you are homeless or about to be evicted, then come in as soon as possible. We will help!

Working Parties. There is always a requirement for working parties, and a call for support will be published periodically. If you can lift and shift, so much the better.

Outreach. ESVH has a programme to attend events during the Summer months, to lift its profile and encourage veterans to engage when they are facing ongoing personal challenges.

Volunteers. We have had several offers from volunteers in and induction sessions are being programmed for February.



Support Services Telephone Contact Numbers

NHS 111 Any medical or health issue, ring **111 IMMEDIATELY**, for advice.

Some GPs have a telephone triage service as well. Also ring 111 for veterans' mental health service (Op Courage) or local crisis team

ESVH 07884263824/01424 446292 Monday Drop In 10am

STAR Freephone 0300 303 81600 **ESRA** 01424 435318 **Seaview** 01424 717981

Job Centre Plus Hastings 0800 169 190

Samaritans Hastings Freephone 0330 094 5717 **National 116 123**

Contact a Veteran you know & ask how they are doing ...

