

# RAF go above and beyond in commitment to community

**R**OEDD hi'n fraint mynychu agoriad swyddogol yr Hwb Cyn-filwyr newydd yn RAF Y Fali. Mae'r Hwb yn gydweithrediad rhwng RAF Y Fali a'n helusen SSAFA leol a hoffwn yn bersonol ddiolch i'r Padre Mike Hall a Kath Eastment am eu holl waith caled ar y prosiect.

**I** WAS honoured to attend the official opening of the new Veterans' Hub at RAF Valley. The Hub is a collaboration between RAF Valley and our local SSAFA charity and I would like to personally thank Padre Mike Hall and Kath Eastment for all their hard work on the project.

The Hub is available to help and support former armed service personnel regardless of how long, when or where they served. With the support of SSAFA and RAF Valley at the hub, veterans can access independent advice and help with a range of issues including housing, benefits and welfare advice. It also provides a central point for social activities.

I have previously discussed the need for an Ynys Môn Veterans' Hub with the Veterans' Minister, Johnny Mercer, and it was fantastic to be at the opening, meet the people involved and speak with many of the veterans already benefitting from the facilities. If you are a veteran and want to find out more please email me at [virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk) or call 01407 644 645 and I will connect you.

My visit to the opening of the Veterans' Hub was the latest of many visits to RAF Valley and I always enjoy meeting the whole force team that works there. Already this year I have welcomed and accompanied the Defence Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence on their visits to the base and in 2023 I was proud to welcome the Prime Minister.

I am thrilled that the UK Government has cemented its commitment to RAF Valley with recent significant funding announcements including £175m for a new flying school, £600m to boost Hawk engineering support and £44m for improvements to the second runway.

It is very fitting that RAF Valley is hosting the first Veterans' Hub on Ynys Môn as the station is an important part of our community here on Anglesey. Whilst we are all aware of the presence of RAF Valley, many will be unaware of the many



● Virginia Crosbie MP at the official opening of the Veterans' Hub in RAF Valley

ways in which the station supports our community. In celebration of the opening of the Veterans' Hub I felt it would be a good time to outline just some of RAF Valley's activities.

As the only remaining RAF station in Wales, RAF Valley has a disproportionately positive impact both at home and overseas for a unit that consists of a little over 300 Service personnel through its activities, charitable contribution and commitment to outreach programmes.

The RAF is committed to promoting "good and friendly relations with communities at home" and RAF Valley is a great example of this ethos.

It is the largest single employer of skilled workers on Anglesey and alongside its service personnel the station employs 30 civil servants and 1200 industry partners. This "team of teams" works together to help enhance the UK's defence programme.

The station personnel are generous with their time, nurturing young individuals through the Babcock Apprenticeship Scheme, their own Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) scheme, the Careers Wales' schools' outreach programmes and the Jon Egging Trust (JET) 'Blue Skies' initiative.

Through its outreach programme the station has worked

with thousands of young people from across North Wales and particularly supports young people who face barriers to learning and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In 2023, RAF Valley helped deliver JET programmes to 208 young people from 10 schools in North Wales, as well as delivering teamwork, leadership and employability sessions to 41 students from Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi.

These helped the young people increase their confidence and resilience, and improved their communication and team-work skills. RAF Valley received the Armed Forces in Wales Award for Youth Support in 2023 in recognition of its work.

RAF Valley also invests in the next generation through its active support of RAF Air Cadets - hosting Annual Camps for these 'air-minded' local young people. The Air Cadet Liaison Officer and her team coordinated activities for seven weeks of summer-camp activity, which also included section visits and flying opportunities. In total, 271 cadets and 54 staff benefited from the Station's support. Valley has also consistently provided its facilities to local youth clubs and groups.

The skills and expertise that form the heart of RAF Valley's work mean that the station's

outreach programmes in the community can provide cutting edge knowledge and experiences to local young people.

RAF Valley is home to No 4 Flying Training School (4 FTS) with its principal mission of training fighter pilots. Virtually every UK fighter pilot deployed on operations globally was trained at RAF Valley in its fleet of Texans and Hawks.

The station's 202 Squadron also trains UK military helicopter crews and others in specialist disciplines in the maritime and littoral environment. The Station is also the headquarters of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service (MRS) and the RAF Valley Mountain Rescue Team. The MRS team is on-call 365 days a year to provide Search and Rescue, Aircraft Post Crash and Incident Management and medical aid in the mountains and at sea.

One of the most tangible ways that RAF Valley has directly benefitted the people of North Wales is through mountain rescue.

In 2023 the MRS were called out 25 times, often in the most testing conditions with horizontal snow, freezing wind and sometimes almost zero visibility.

One such recent rescue was of four young people lost on a dangerous pass, suffering with hypothermia. MRS were hon-

oured in July 2023 with the well-attended commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the founding of their Service at RAF Llanwrog (now Caernarfon Airport).

In June, RAF Valley personnel established an Ambulance First Responders Team, which now has 13 trained volunteers. This is highly appreciated in a rural area where ambulance access can be difficult, and a timely response can mean the difference between life and death. In 2023 alone, the team responded to 23 emergency call-outs and provided life-saving care to 17 patients. Since October, 202 Sqn has been working closely with RNLI North Wales to help train their crews to work with helicopters and thereby enhance their ability to transfer and treat casualties in an efficient and safe manner.

RAF Valley is particularly proud of its Welsh links offering Welsh courses to its personnel and celebrating key dates in the Welsh calendar like St David's Day and St Dwynwen's Day. The station's Friends and Family day is a staple of Ynys Môn's summer calendar and the team also host stands at events like the Anglesey Show.

During 2023 the base hosted over 170 visits, carried out liaison visits and delivered community presentations to many local groups and organisations. Also during 2023, RAF Valley raised over £12,500 for several charities and played a key role in the Royal British Legion (RBL) Poppy Appeal with North Wales Veterans being a particular focus. The annual Veterans' Christmas lunch has become a tradition in the RAF Valley calendar with no shortage of whole force volunteers to host and serve lunch and to pack and deliver 50 gift boxes.

At Christmas Station staff also purchased and donated nearly 200 new toys and games to Anglesey children in care ensuring each individual child would have a present to open on Christmas morning. The range of local, national and international charity activities RAF Valley support is too numerous to cover here in full.

The station also engages with local habitat and wildlife initiatives and has been involved with dolphin and whale strandings as well as working closely with Friends of the Anglesey Coastal Path and the RSPB. The team regularly organises beach cleans and led the planning and logistical support for the rehabilitation of a critically endangered Kemps-Ridley turtle back to the Gulf of Mexico last August.

RAF Valley is also undertaking the biggest tree planting scheme within the RAF as its contribution to the late Queen's 'Green Canopy' project and has facilitated the installation of 15 Swift Boxes under the North Wales Wildlife Trust's Swift Project with a view to increasing the UK's endangered swift population.

I hope that you will join me in celebrating and thanking RAF Valley and its whole force team for their commitment to our community and to the extensive work they carry out to support the people of Ynys Môn.

I enjoy meeting as many constituents as possible, as well as helping individuals, groups and organisations with problems, projects and ideas.

You can contact me at [virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk) or call me on 01407 644645. Diolch yn fawr.

Rwy'n mwynhau cyfarfod â chymaint o etholwyr â phosibl, yn ogystal â helpu unigolion, grwpiau a sefydliadau gyda problemau, prosiectau a syniadau. Yna cysylltwch â ni - byddwn wrth fy modd ynclwyd gennych - gallwch gysylltu â mi ar [virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk) neu ffoniwch fi ar 01407 644645. Diolch yn fawr.