

Speech: Soldiering on Awards

It seems hard to believe that a year has gone by since the last Soldiering On Awards.

And what a year for our Armed Forces! All three Services have been flying the flag for Britain – from the RAF in Syria and over the Black Sea, to our Navy keeping the ocean sea lanes free, and our Army leading NATO's deployment in the Baltic.

What's more, we're celebrating 100 years since the end of the First World War and the birth of the RAF – the first and most famous independent air force in the world.

What better way to celebrate such a year than with the Soldiering On Awards?

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this evening, when we recognise and honour the talent, inspiration and enterprise of our Armed Forces community – whether serving, Reservists, or former members ... along with all those who support them.

Tonight we don't just celebrate bravery, determination and teamwork. We celebrate compassion and care. And the "can do" attitude which brings all those qualities together in the ethos of all those who serve.

These Awards shine a light on how that ethos contributes to society as a whole. Because our bond – our mutual dependence – extends well beyond times of danger ... times when we look to our Armed Forces for security and protection.

As a community and as a nation, we are truly stronger together.

This year the involvement of X-Forces extends the reach of the Awards even further. Now they fully encompass the business community – from start-up entrepreneurs to established businesses.

It's a great pleasure to welcome so many of you tonight, including X-Forces' Patron, Lord Young.

The Soldiering On Finalists here tonight come from right across our Armed Forces community. I'm humbled and privileged to be amongst such an outstanding group.

In reaching this stage, each and every one of you is a winner – and this evening is for all of you.

Distinguished guests, please join me in a round of applause for the 2018 Finalists ...

But that's enough from me. Let's hear from some previous Finalists and Winners.

Press release: Animal welfare enhanced by new code for laying hens and pullets

The welfare code for laying hens has today been updated as part of a programme of reforms to safeguard and enhance the welfare of animals.

Strengthened statutory guidance is now in place for keepers and owners of laying hens and pullets on how to meet the needs of their birds and enhance their welfare.

This welfare code has been updated to reflect the very latest advice from vets and animal husbandry developments, as part of a programme of reforms to safeguard and enhance the welfare of animals, the Minister for Animal Welfare, Lord Gardiner announced today.

Minister for Animal Welfare, Lord Gardiner, said:

We have some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and are going further in a number of areas, including our plans to raise maximum sentences for animal cruelty to five years and making CCTV mandatory in abattoirs.

This code was carefully consulted on with industry experts, and uses the most recent scientific and veterinary advice to ensure this clear guidance provides the best advice to owners and keepers to help ensure the high welfare standards of their animals.

Animal keepers are now expected to provide a more enriched environment for all laying hens to enable them to display more of their natural behaviours such as foraging, helping to ensure more fulfilled and healthier animals. The user-friendly codes also provide detailed guidance to animal keepers on how to assess the welfare of their animals, as well as on contingency planning to help ensure the welfare of their animals during any emergencies.

The codes will be used by enforcement bodies including Animal and Plant Health Agency inspectors and local authorities when investigating allegations of poor welfare to look at whether animal welfare standards are being met.

The full code is available to [read online](#).

Notice: Ian Mercer and Andrew Mercer: application made to abstract water

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for the abstraction and impoundment of water.

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
 - which Environment Agency offices you can visit to see the application documents on the public register
 - when you need to comment by
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Form: Check evidence and record keeping requirements: Countryside Stewardship

Download the spreadsheet tool to check what evidence you need to provide for Mid Tier and Offers for Wildlife applications. It's for 2018 applications where agreements would start on 1 January 2019.

There are 2 versions of the tool:

- the XLSM file for use with Microsoft Excel
- the ODS file is an open standards format that should work with most spreadsheet software

Both versions include guidance for users.

If you cannot use the tool, you can still check what evidence you need to supply using the [Countryside Stewardship grant finder](#).

Contact

Contact Natural England if you have queries or difficulty using the tool:

Enquiries

Natural England
County Hall, Spetchley Road

Worcester

WR5 2NP

Email
enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

Telephone
0300 060 3900

Opening times: 8:30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays)

Find out about call charges at www.gov.uk/call-charges.