

ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION
COUNCIL MEETING
17TH SEPTEMBER 2008

BENEVOLENCE REPORT

1. **REA Benevolence.** Benevolence remains the highest priority for the Association's work. During 2007 the Association continued to assist those "Serving Sappers, the former Sapper, his wife or partner, widow and their dependant children". 1048 cases were handled with assistance being given to 1026; this was an increase of 12% over the previous year at one stage in the year demand was much higher so the Chairman REA Benevolence asked Council, and was granted, additional funds to cover this unexpected increase in applications. Had it not been for a most fortuitous receipt of a large legacy it may have been necessary to realise some of our capital. Most benevolence went to the disabled in the form of stair lifts, electrically powered vehicles and bath lifts. We are also finding that requests for walk-in showers are rising and are proving to be quite expensive. The total cost of all benevolence in 2007 was £658K, including weekly allowances (£87.5K), grants (£427.6K) and Special Christmas Grants (£32.5K).

2. One of the tasks for the staff at HQ REA is to process and check the validity of each application. The Benevolence committee then confirms whether there is a proven 'need' and whether there are any other sources of funds either from service with other Regiments or Corps or from other civilian charities and/or trade unions. We also confirm whether the applicant is in receipt of all State Benefits to which he or she may be entitled. Other charities such as The Royal British Legion (TRBL) and the Army Benevolent Fund (ABF) are approached to almonise to the full financial amount requested with as little delay as possible. The agreement to approach the ABF only after we have contributed at least £1,000 towards a case is working well. Where the applicant has been a Trade Union member we also approach that Union but find that the response is often much slower!

3. All this would not be possible without the work of volunteer case-workers of SSAFA Forces Help (64% of our cases were handled by them) and TRBL (31%) who make home visits in response to a cry for help and quantify the need to us. We are totally indebted to all these Caseworkers for their time and careful consideration and also all others who give their time generously, helping this vulnerable part of our service family community; without their assistance the REA would find it difficult to carry out its work. Grants totalling £35,000 are given to the Army Benevolent Fund and SSAFA Forces Help for their assistance. Council has also agreed to give a major grant of £7.5K to Combat Stress with an ongoing annual grant from 2009 of £2.5K in recognition of their excellent work for this susceptible group of our family.

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4. All cases below £500 are delegated to the Controller REA and the remainder are referred to the REA Benevolence Committee that meets monthly in London. The Committee is chaired by Brigadier Andy Craig and consists of the following permanent members: the REA Honorary Treasurer, two Lady Members (*with CAB and SS.AFA experience*), a Retired Officer, Retired TA Officer, CO 1 RSME Regt and the RSM of 3 RSME. We are most grateful for their time and contribution to the Committee. Observers are invited from regular and TA units and from REA Branches to see the committee's work at first hand; there is also a standing invitation to all trustees. We encourage all observers to spread the word within their units, Messes and REA Branches as to how their contributions through the Day's Pay Scheme are being spent.

5. **Legacies.** In 2007 we were most fortunate to receive legacies of £823K from several sources to help us with our benevolence work; they were gratefully received.

6. **Trends.** There was a 12% increase in the number of applications in 2007 compared to the previous year and expenditure was up by 20.5%. The increase in benevolence funds which Council authorised for this year is proving to meet the demand so far in 2008.

7. **TA Contributions.** The TA as a whole do not contribute to our benevolent work or to the Association through the Days Pay Scheme but the individuals are able to receive financial assistance from the REA in hard times. The Regimental Colonel has written to all TA units explaining this and asked that the Association be considered when units are considering the distribution of monies from gaming machines or income from sponsored events. We are pleased to report an encouraging response from the TA and have received a number of contributions from Commanding Officers towards the REA Benevolence Fund; long may it continue.