



Commodore J Le S Perks CBE Royal Navy  
Commodore of the Submarine Service  
Belmore House  
HM Naval Base Clyde  
HELENSBURGH  
G84 8HL

Telephone: 01436 674321 Ext 7552

25 Nov 20

Friends and Colleagues,

## **COMMODORE SUBMARINE SERVICE UPDATE**

### **Introduction**

As the head of the Submarine Service and Commander of the Submarine Flotilla, I wanted to reach out to colleagues, friends and supporters of our organisation to provide an update on the good work and activity that has been initiated following a change in the organisational structure of the Submarine Service.

In line with the overall Royal Navy transformation process, the Submarine Service has continued to evolve. When Rear Admiral John Weale retired from his position as Rear Admiral Submarines (RASM), the position of Head of the Fighting Arm was reassigned under my organisation. Thus, we have now instituted a revised command structure for the Submarine Service headed up by me as Commodore of the Submarine Service (COSM).

During these unprecedented times, we are working within the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and we have continued to maintain submarine operational output despite these challenges. We have had all 3 operational SSBNs at sea, 2 T-boats at very high readiness and HMS AUDACIOUS powering through her sea trial programme. Against this backdrop much has also been achieved in our supporting activity, the main aim of which is to provide further support to our submarine community and I provide a brief run through of the exciting initiatives that have been put in place below.

### **Commodore of the Submarine Service (COSM)**

COSM, through the organisation's Chief of Staff has re-invigorated a more inclusive and wider management structure representing not only the serving community, but also various veteran and charity organisations, families and associated support organisations. Much already exists to support the submariner in their job, however we are now concentrating on building 'home resilience'. To enable a modern submariner to be effective at work, they need a firm base. This 'home resilience tool' is supported by three legs, 'reactive support' such as welfare, medical or mental health; 'ongoing support' such as facilities, events and challenges, and 'esprit de corps' which includes a collective identity, uniform, heritage and commemoration. In support of this, much specific work is now underway.

### **Submarine Fund (SMF)**

This fund has been established under the umbrella of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC). The objective is to promote the well-being of submariners, the ethos of the service and submarine heritage. Following its inauguration and soft launch in April under the chairmanship of Rear Admiral John Weale, a hard launch is planned for early next year. As it establishes itself and RNRMC develop its web presence under their updated IT system, it is aiming to be fully functional by spring 2021. A major aspiration is to have a streamlined giving system that will automatically provide contributors with membership to all the key submarine veterans and heritage organisations, which will be of benefit to all members of our submarine family. In the meantime, we

are encouraging our people to support the charity through initiatives such as setting RNRMC as the selected charity on Amazon prime.

The launch of the SMF and our organisation's revised management process has brought with it the opportunity to bring together the organisations that currently exist to support submariners. COSM and executive boards have been created to coordinate the exchanging of ideas and information, aiming to improve our digital footprint and communications.

### **The Submarine Flotilla Secretary**

With this restructure, the role of Regimental Secretary was formalised and rebadged as Submarine Flotilla Secretary (SUBSEC). This role will act as a focal point for the submarine community, supporting serving and retired submariners in coordination with submarine charities and organisations in order to foster the submarine spirit and ethos. SUBSEC currently runs the submarine community mailing list, is the Project Officer for the Submariner Memorial Appeal and is assisting COSM in the development of the SMF.

### **Submarine Family Resilience Initiative (SFRI) and Mental Health Champions**

This is the most recent initiative launched by COSM. It aims to build on the work of the 'HMS OARDACIOUS' team, four Royal Navy submariners who became the fastest serving military team to row unsupported across the Atlantic Ocean, from the Canary Islands to Nelson's Dockyard in Antigua. This momentous effort, which took 37 days, 6 hours and 40 minutes, raised over £100k to provide mental health and wellbeing support to the submarine community. The SFRI aims to continue to raise the profile of mental health in addition to raising the profile of the Submarine Service and develop partnerships that add value to our community.

Further to this, the COSM organisation and SFRI has established a mental health champions team, looking to harness and coherently work with a range of organisations to promote positive mental health to the submarine community. The team has been working hard on pushing the Headfit initiative ([www.headfit.org](http://www.headfit.org)) and is pioneering an offline platform of the tool that can be readily available for deployed personnel.

Using the SFRI and 'Oardacious' experience we have conducted many webinar engagements over the last few months, pushing out a very positive image of the Submarine Service to important industrial partners. Similarly, through our engagement activity at COSM executive board level, we have shared military associated activity that previously didn't involve the submarine world with our families. One of these organisations is the Never Such Innocence Project ([www.neversuchinnocence.com](http://www.neversuchinnocence.com)) which runs an international poetry, art, speech and song competition for young people aged 9-19, focusing on conflict and its impact.

### **The Submariner Memorial Appeal**

Although launched at a difficult time for charities, this appeal aims to establish a fitting memorial at the National Arboretum. Following a highly successful design competition, the winning designs have now been selected and will inspire three professional designers competing for the final commission. We are now putting a major effort into supporting the appeal's main fundraising effort which will require over £300,000 to be raised to build and endow the memorial.

### **Proposed Cold War and Maritime Heritage Museum Plymouth**

The National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) are currently further developing the Devonport Heritage Centre with the aim of raising the profile of the Royal Navy in Devonport. They are currently putting together a proposal for a museum that tells the Cold War story of Submarines and Plymouth based ships, based around HMS Courageous. We are watching with interest and standing by to provide support.

## **Family Support and Events**

In order to raise awareness of the support available to all members of the submarine family, a comprehensive and up to date Families Guide is in the final stages of production. This will reference the services and organisations which are there to assist our community in one family friendly guide. This will initially be released in a printed format, with an electronic version following in the new year. In addition to other improvements in digital communications, this should aid our submarine family cohesiveness and improve universal access to beneficial information.

Further to the existing support provided to families, plans are underfoot to bring our families and communities together with workplace-based Families Days and BBQs. Unfortunately, these are currently on hold due to pandemic restrictions, but will move forward as soon as it is safe and we look forward to bringing our community together in social setting.

The submarine birthday event, known as the 'Gambit' dinner, is usually an extremely popular event in the submarine calendar but was unfortunately cancelled at the last minute. Likewise, the annual submarine 'Oscars' award ceremony has been postponed until it can be rearranged, hopefully in early 2021. Future plans include establishing an annual submarine charity dinner, details of which will be promulgated soon.

## **Submarine Ethos**

To establish and maintain our unique 'esprit de corps', those entering the Royal Navy who have been selected and streamed as future submariners have been issued with training dolphins. These will allow them to stand out in the early stages of training as being a part of our exclusive club. These dolphins will then be exchanged for gold dolphins when they complete their formal submarine training.

## **Submarine Family**

My vision is primarily aimed at making the submarine family a more cohesive, recognisable group with a strong community identity. From the first day a submariner enters their initial training establishment, through each life event they and their families encounter both in and outside of the service, they should be looked after by our community. I am determined to promote and help drive the initiatives referred to in this update through to completion and I am excited to see the benefits derived from them across the Submarine Service.

