

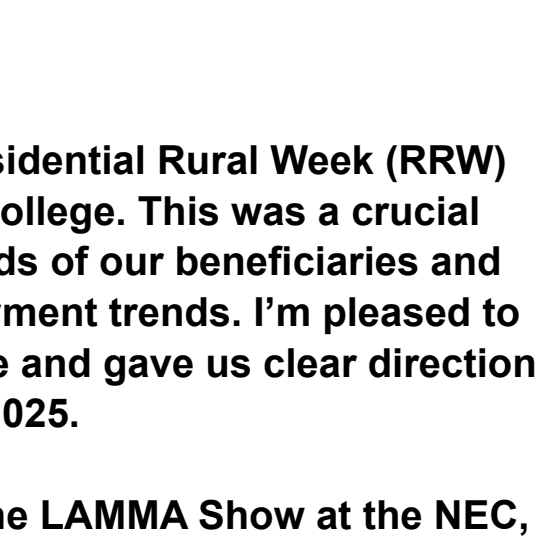


WELCOME TO OUR 2025 WINTER NEWSLETTER

FROM JAMIE CRISP, CEO

As the days grow longer and the land wakes up after a long winter, it's the perfect time to reflect on how the year has started for HighGround. Since our Christmas newsletter, the team has been hard at work up and down the country — reviewing, connecting, and evolving the way we deliver our service. The pace has been fast, the impact significant, and I'm proud to share just a few highlights with you all.

We kicked off the year by hitting the road — attending numerous Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and British Forces Resettlement Services (BFRS) events across the country. These remain a vital part of our outreach, offering us the chance to meet service leavers face-to-face and introduce them to the breadth of land-based opportunities available through HighGround. It's always encouraging to see the appetite and curiosity grow around our work with each event we attend.



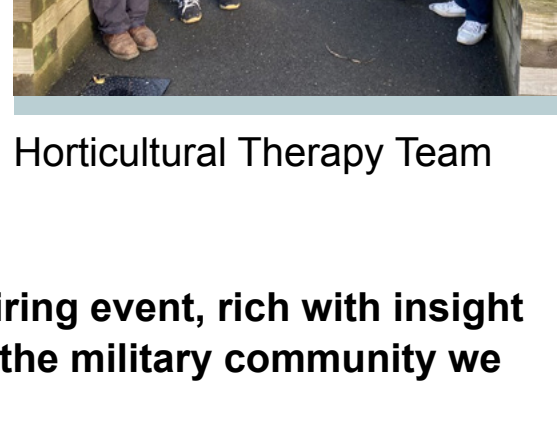
Career Transition Partnership

In January, we took a deep dive into our flagship Residential Rural Week (RRW) programme, holding a full-service review at Bicton College. This was a crucial moment to assess how well RRW is meeting the needs of our beneficiaries and how closely it aligns with current land-based employment trends. I'm pleased to say the review reaffirmed the programme's relevance and gave us clear direction to further enhance its delivery as we move through 2025.

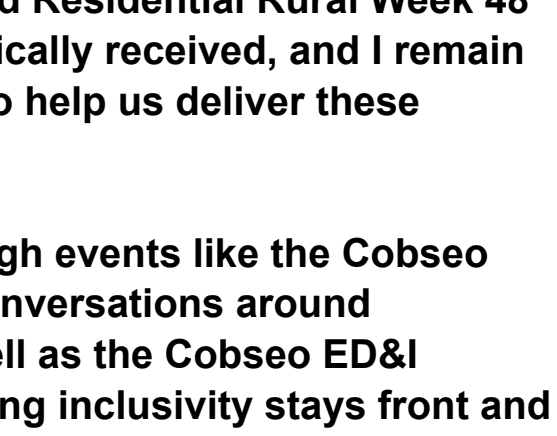
Later that month, we had the opportunity to attend the LAMMA Show at the NEC, one of the UK's leading agricultural machinery events. A particular highlight was meeting Kaleb Cooper of Clarkson's Farm fame — a passionate voice for British farming, and someone who recognises the vital importance of attracting new people into the sector. The show also gave us the chance to reconnect with existing supporters and forge new partnerships within the industry.

Strategic thinking is just as important as delivery, and mid January we brought together our Board of Trustees to The Farmers Club for our annual Strategy Away Day. This gathering provided space for reflection, honest conversation, and alignment around our goals for the year ahead. With such strong governance behind us, I'm confident we're moving into the next phase of HighGround's development with purpose and clarity.

Another exciting development is our transition to GoodHub as our new platform for fundraising and events. This will significantly improve how we manage donations and fundraising campaigns, and give our supporters a better experience overall — clean, simple, and modern. We're looking forward to showing you what it can do.


highground-uk.org/support-us/donate-now

We also completed a full review of our Horticultural Occupational Therapy (HOT) service at DMRC Stanford Hall. This work is central to HighGround's clinical pathway, and we're proud to play a part in the recovery journey of patients through meaningful, Horticultural Occupational Therapy (HOT). The review was an important opportunity to reflect on what's working well and how we can continue to innovate and improve our therapy delivery going forward.



Horticultural Therapy Team

We also had the privilege of attending the Pen and Sword Club at the Little Ship Club in London, where Lord Dannatt gave a brilliant keynote on his time overseeing the Tower of London. It was an inspiring event, rich with insight and history, and a timely reminder of the strength of the military community we serve as well as great networking event.

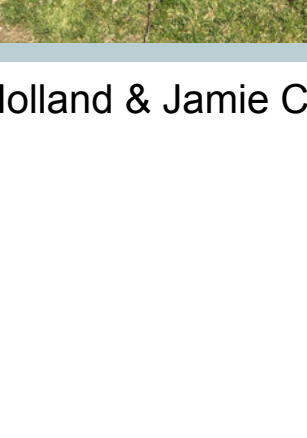
Delivery continues to be at the heart of what we do, and I'm delighted to report that we've successfully run Virtual Rural Week 24 and Residential Rural Week 48 already this year. Both programmes were enthusiastically received, and I remain incredibly proud of the team and all our partners who help us deliver these transformational weeks for service leavers.

We've also remained engaged at national level through events like the Cobseo Employment Cluster, where we continue to shape conversations around employment and transition for service leavers, as well as the Cobseo ED&I Symposium at the Royal British Legion HQ — ensuring inclusivity stays front and centre across the sector.

In February, I attended the Landex Annual Conference, where we heard from Rt Hon Jacqui Smith, Minister for Skills, and Daniel Zeichner, Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs. These events are key in helping us keep our finger on the pulse of education, food production, and environmental policy — all vital to the land-based sector.

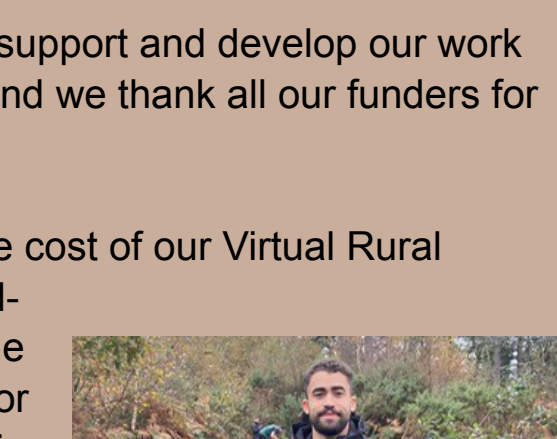
Most recently, we were at Silverstone for the National Transition Event, where once again we met a host of service leavers, providers, and employers keen to understand more about HighGround's work.

More recently we have been proud to announce a new partnership with Carma Earth — a relationship we're confident will create exciting new opportunities in the sustainability and environmental spaces, drive Veteran advocacy through both organisations and support future relationships within the corporate world.



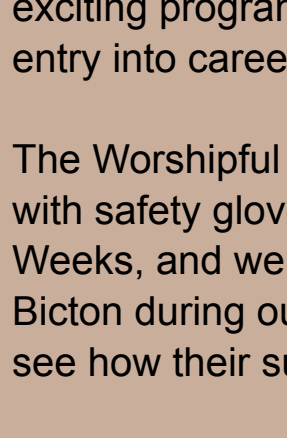
Doing good, together

And finally, I'm very pleased to share that HighGround's very first podcast is due to launch in early May. We'll be bringing you real voices, stories, and insights from across the land-based sector and our incredible community of veterans, supporters, and employers. Keep an eye (and ear!) out — more details will follow soon.



Jim Holland & Jamie Crisp

As always, I want to thank each and every one of you who walks alongside us — our funders, partners, volunteers, and the remarkable individuals who place their trust in HighGround during life's transitions. Together, we're helping those who've served their country find purpose and fulfilment in new surroundings — and we're just getting started.



With my very best wishes,

Jamie Crisp,
CEO, HighGround

FUNDRAISING NEWS

Like all charities, HighGround's fundraising challenge to support and develop our work with those who have served their Country is relentless, and we thank all our funders for their continued and generous support.

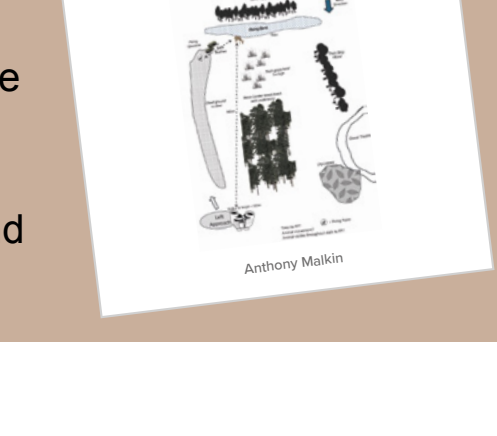
The Forces Trust have again generously underwritten the cost of our Virtual Rural Weeks programme which continues to introduce the land-based sector to those still serving who want to explore the many and varied employment opportunities which exist for individuals with military skills and experience early in their resettlement.

We thank the Army Benevolent Fund and Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust for their support of our work at DMRC Stanford Hall, and Lloyds Patriotic Fund who continue to support our Female Only Rural Week which aims to provide greater focus on the amazing opportunities available for women in the land-based sector. The Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund are also supporting our Female Veterans into Land-based Teaching project, and exciting programme which will encourage and support entry into careers in land-based colleges.

The Worshipful Company of Glovers support us in kind with safety gloves which are very useful during Rural Weeks, and we are looking forward to welcoming them to Bicton during our 2025 Rural Weeks programme so they can see how their support helps our work.

Tony Malkin joined us for an early Rural Week at Plumpton College and has generously donated to HighGround from the sale of his excellent new book.

These in-kind donations are so important to HighGround, and we thank you all.

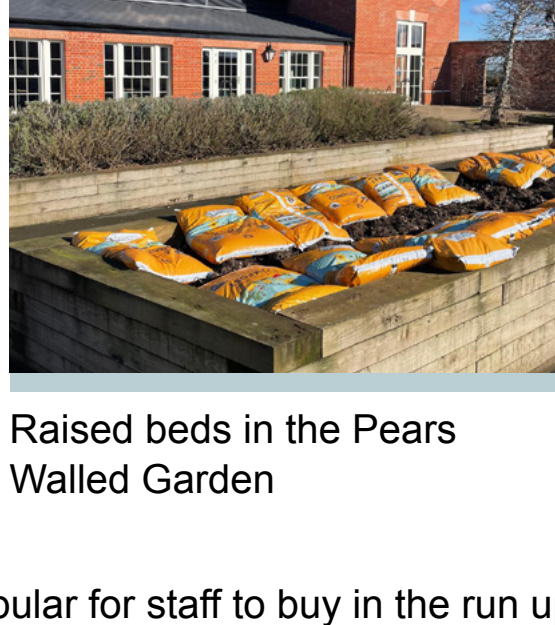


Worshipful Company of Glovers donate safety gloves for use during Rural Weeks

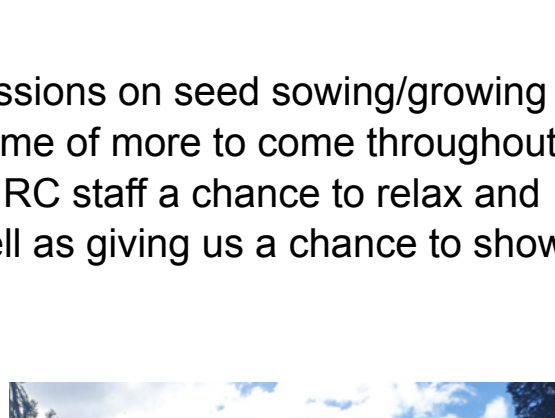


HORTICULTURAL THERAPY – DMRC STANFORD HALL

The sun has most definitely been making a regular appearance in recent weeks, and all the plants are appreciating it as well as the whole team. The Daffodils are in full flower, spring blossom is on the trees and everything else is gradually emerging. We have welcomed our garden volunteers back who as always do an excellent job of supporting us and their help is greatly appreciated.

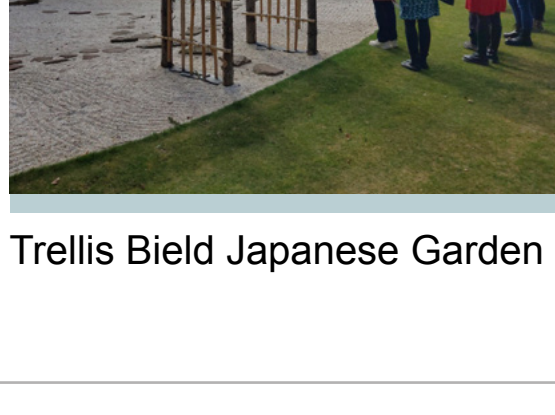


We have a wonderful range of raised beds of differing heights which makes gardening accessible for all. However, access to ground level beds is limited in the therapeutic garden areas for those patients who need to work at a lower level. We have started to create some ground level "no dig" beds to remedy this and create additional planting space. It was a useful way of teaching this process to a patient who was keen to learn about ways of gardening in the UK climate and may look at allotment growing in the future as a way of continuing this interest.



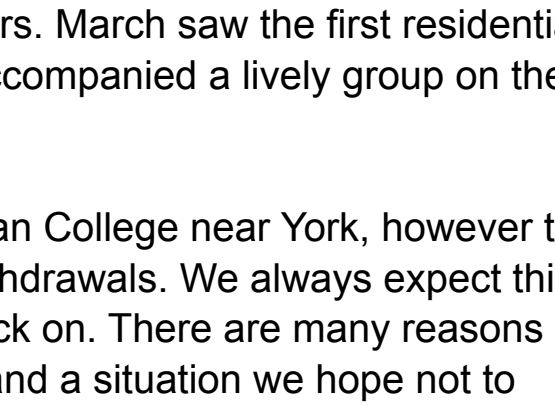
Ground level 'no dig' beds

We now have two extra raised beds in the Pears Walled Garden which will provide much needed extra space for growing. This generates both a wider range of activities for patients and a way of generating income for the service through donations made at our annual farm shop.



Raised beds in the Pears Walled Garden

Grace has taken charge of the compost and built a large riddle for sieving it so we can mulch the beds and create space for fresh compostable materials. After several years, the existing bays are falling apart so we are in the process of purchasing new compost pens which will tidy up this area.



Our Autumn sown Sweet Peas have generated a few different therapeutic activities from the original seed sowing, to picking out, and potting on into larger pots with Dogwood plant supports. Some of the seeds used were saved from last year's crop. They proved popular for staff to buy in the run up to Mother's Day and raised extra funds for the garden.



Trellis Bield Japanese Garden

We delivered our first two staff health and well-being sessions on seed sowing/growing followed by wildflower seed bombs and have a programme of more to come throughout the year. These sessions are well received and give DMRC staff a chance to relax and get to know each other in a creative environment; as well as giving us a chance to show what we do with patients.

We were pleased to welcome Tanya Bearup, the vice president of Therapeutic Horticulture Australia, for a visit which was a lovely chance to share the work we do.



As part of their continuing professional development, Grace and Jane attended the annual Trellis Conference in Perth. It was an informative day in a beautiful setting with opportunity to reflect on practice, share ideas, knowledge and receive an update on the work being done to develop a therapeutic horticulture professional association and register.



OPERATIONS NEWS

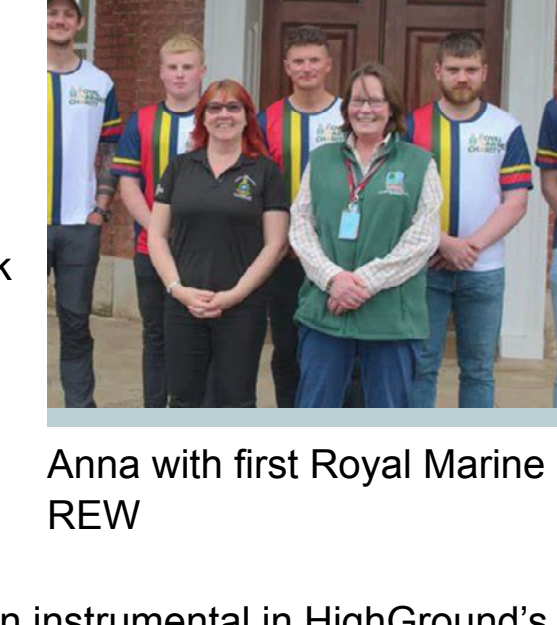
RURAL WEEKS

The first virtual rural week of 2025 took place in February and although slightly low in numbers produced engaging questions for our presenters. March saw the first residential of the year at Bicton College and a week of sunshine accompanied a lively group on their visits around Devon.

We had hoped to run a residential week at Askham Bryan College near York, however this very sadly had to be cancelled the week prior due to withdrawals. We always expect this, but this time did not have the usual waiting list to fall back on. There are many reasons participants are unable to attend, but this was unusual and a situation we hope not to repeat.

CAREERS FAIRS AND EVENTS

The year has already been busy with careers events in Bristol and York; attendance at the National Transition Event; The Gen Dit Network event, Bristol; Ladies into Employment event, London; and monthly visits to Tedworth Hall which have enabled us to meet and reach service leavers, veterans and reservists introducing them to career opportunities in the rural sector.



UWS Armed Forces Covenant

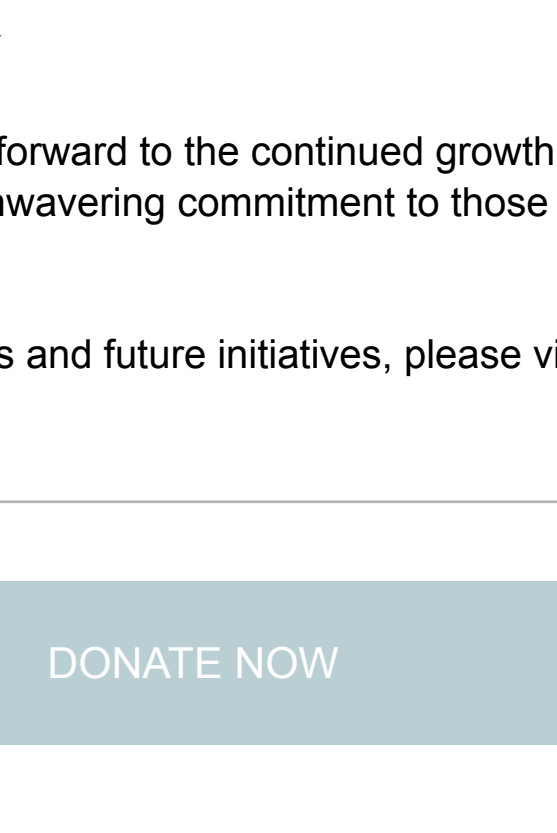
If you would like us to come and do a presentation to your organisation or group, please do get in touch.

Diaries depending, we will do our best to attend.

One of the exciting projects this year is the Female Veterans into Land-based Teaching programme in partnership with Sparsholt College Hampshire and Cornwall College Group. Evaluation will be carried out by a team at the University of the West of Scotland, and we were delighted to attend the ceremony where they signed the Armed Forces Covenant and were awarded the Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award in recognition of the work they do with the military community, service leavers, veterans and reservists. A wonderful celebration and one we were honoured to support. We are looking forward to a long and productive relationship.

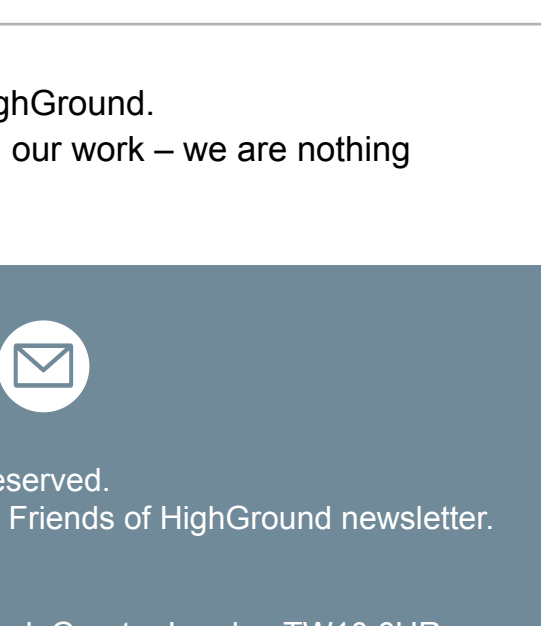
WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Hopefully you will be keeping up with Latest News and Good News Stories on the website and will have noticed the regular campaigns for projects, courses as well as reports on the rural weeks. If you have enjoyed the professional design of some of the images on social media and also the newsletters, we must pay homage to Shaun Cuff, talented content creator who freelances for us. We are indebted to him, his advice and guidance.



CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF HIGHGROUND'S FOUNDER, ANNA BAKER CRESSWELL BY OUR CEO JAMIE CRISP.

As we approach the end of May 2025, HighGround prepares to bid a heartfelt farewell to our founder, Anna Baker Cresswell, who will be stepping down after 13 years of unwavering dedication and visionary leadership. Anna's departure marks the conclusion of an era that has profoundly shaped the charity and the lives of countless individuals within the military and land-based sectors.



Anna Baker Cresswell

A VISION TAKES ROOT

In 2013, Anna identified a critical gap in support for service leavers and veterans transitioning to civilian life. Recognizing the therapeutic and vocational potential of the land-based sector, she established HighGround with a clear mission: to provide opportunities for those who have served their country to find purpose and employment in the great outdoors. Her foresight laid the foundation for a charity that seamlessly bridges military experience with rural and agricultural vocations.

PIONEERING PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Under Anna's stewardship, HighGround introduced innovative initiatives such as HighGround's Rural Weeks program. Launched in partnership with institutions such as Bicton College and Askham Bryan College, these week-long courses have offered immersive experiences, equipping participants with the knowledge and networks essential for careers in agriculture, horticulture, conservation and many more. The inaugural Rural Week at Askham Bryan College in November 2023 stands as a testament to Anna's commitment to expanding HighGround's reach and impact.



Anna with first Royal Marine RWA

Anna's ability to forge meaningful collaborations has been instrumental in HighGround's success. Notably, the affiliation with the Pen and Sword Club and SSAFA, celebrated in June 2024, exemplifies her dedication to uniting organisations with shared values to enhance support for the armed forces community. Cobseo, Highground, Pen and Sword Club and SSAFA

LOOKING AHEAD

As Anna embarks on a new chapter with her venture, Garden Therapeutic Tours, her legacy at HighGround remains indelible. Her vision has not only transformed the lives of many veterans and service leavers but has also cultivated a culture of resilience, growth, and connection to the land.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Anna for her years of service, passion. The seeds she has sown will continue to flourish, guiding HighGround as we build upon the strong foundation she established.

JOIN US IN CELEBRATION

Anna's final engagement with HighGround will be on May 29, 2025, at the City Veterans CIC charity dinner at Lancaster House, where HighGround is honoured to be the charity of choice. This event will serve as a fitting tribute to her remarkable contributions and the enduring legacy she leaves behind.

CELEBRATING ANNA BAKER CRESSWELL'S LEGACY

As we honour Anna's journey with HighGround, we look forward to the continued growth and evolution of the charity, inspired by her vision and unwavering commitment to those who have served.

For more information on HighGround's ongoing programs and future initiatives, please visit our website and follow us on our social media channels.

GET IN TOUCH

DONATE NOW

GDPR AND OUR STANDARDS

GDPR came into effect on 25th May 2018. We had an extremely busy run up to this date, but our small team were able to pull out all the stops and get things in place in time. As a charity we take GDPR and the security of your information very seriously. To this end, we have ensured that all of our data processors comply rigorously to keep everything secure. You can read about our Standards [here](#).

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Do please share it with anyone you think would be interested in our work – we are nothing without our Friends.

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Funded by the Armed Forces Covenant with funding from the Covenant Fund.
We are proud to be a member of Cobseo.

CITY VETERANS ctc