

NEWSLETTER

Issue 6 – March 2019



*** * * REMINDER: The Inaugural AGM of VAPP * * * ***

Our AGM on Friday 26th April will be held in the East Midlands area, with further details to be released to members via email.

Members will need their membership cards on the day.

We will not be able to accommodate persons turning up at the door.

Editorial

Firstly, very good news regarding the continuing recovery of our Party Leader, Robin Horsfall, from his serious illness. We hope to see him around and about the country on behalf of the Party as soon as he is fit and able.

This issue features an article on Benefit Fraud and the profiles of two selected VAPP election candidates: Mark Tunnicliff and Lee Cartwright. Congratulations to both; I know all the Party will wish you every

success and good fortune on the campaign trails.

We also print our first received Letter to the Editors – commenting on the BBC licence fee. Many would agree with his sentiments.

The search for further candidates continues apace and we hope shortly to appoint non-military candidates successfully to expand our perspective election appeal.

Yet again, I make a general appeal to members at large to

comment on our policies, criticise where you feel criticism is merited, offer suggestions or write to the editors. It was our intention to publish a monthly Newsletter, but the dearth of articles is making this target unrealistic - a pity. We cannot just rely upon the same few correspondents to continually churn out articles each issue. There must be some of you who are handy with the pen: writing, drawing cartoons or formulating crosswords. Don't be shy, your Party needs your inputs.

Editors:

Helen Wemyss

Tony Duignan

all queries to: communications@ukveteransandpeoplesparty.org

Benefits & Fraud

by Geoff Wilkins

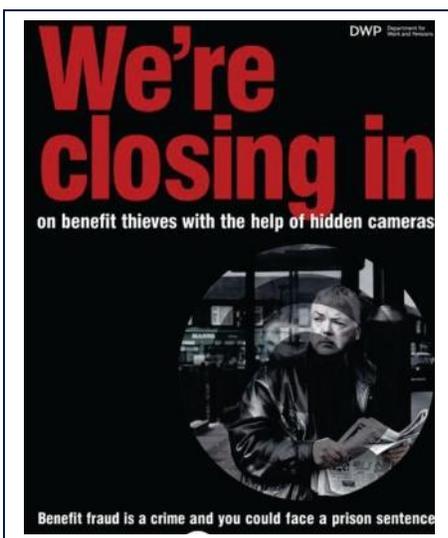
Fraud is the fastest growing area of crime in the UK and probably the modern World at the present time. Our enforcement agencies are ill equipped to deal with it and, consequently, vast amounts of fraud go undetected. In broad terms fraud is unlawfully obtaining somebody else's property, usually money, by some form of deception and can be facilitated in many ways. Some of the most common frauds are Bank Fraud, IT Fraud, Cheque Fraud, Prescription Fraud, False Accounting and Identity Fraud. The media are currently full of reports of vulnerable older people being defrauded out of their life savings and pensions.

Having spent 35 years in Criminal Investigation work and the last 14 years of my working life managing a Benefit Fraud Investigation Unit, today I am going to give a brief overview about Benefit and Fraud.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) administer the Social Security Benefits system for the Government and billions of pounds of public money is paid out annually to claimants. Further vast amounts of public money are also used in administering the benefits

system which, in our modern caring Society, is invaluable as a safety net for all of us who may from time to time fall on difficult times.

It is paramount that benefit only goes to genuine claimants. Unfortunately, the unscrupulous in our society will always try to defraud the system and steal huge quantities of public money. In my time, it was generally accepted that about 10% of all benefits paid went out as the result of fraud and human error, although the largest amount was through fraud and I am sure that has not changed.



When we talk about Benefits, I refer to the likes of Housing and Council Tax Benefit, Employment Benefits such as Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, and Tax Credits and the Health Benefits such as

Incapacity Benefit, Personal Independence Payments, and Attendance Allowance, to name but a few. Many Benefits are means tested so that it is important that claimants declare all their full circumstances correctly and also notify the DWP when they have a change in their circumstances. There is a declaration on all claim forms which must be signed to say that they will do this. Deliberate failure to do so is where the deception occurs and claimants receive benefits to which they are not entitled. Over a period of time this can run into thousands of pounds of public money.

Because all benefits have specific criteria to qualify for them, it usually requires a long and complicated claim form to be completed so that assessing officers have all the information necessary to ensure the claimant is getting the right amount of benefit. Unfortunately, claimants do not always have all the necessary information to hand and it takes time to get it. There is a lot of criticism in the press at present about the time it takes to administer benefits and this is usually the reason. Also, being awarded one type of benefit can be a gateway to being entitled to other benefits, which each require their own scrutiny.

In an attempt to simplify the process, the Government is trying to introduce Universal Credit (UC) to combine 6 different benefits with one on-line claims process but the complexity has been problematic and there are ongoing delays in rolling out this process. It is also proving to be very expensive.

Assessing Officers are clerical officers and not detectives; they do their best to identify suspicious claims and pass them to fraud investigation teams to pursue. The types of fraud most commonly encountered are:

- People claiming unemployment benefits when in fact they are working and failing to declare their income.
- People failing to declare all their savings and capital.
- People claiming they are a single parent or lone occupant when they have a partner living with them.
- People claiming that they are renting a property when in fact they own it.
- People claiming for levels of disability they do not have.

The list of types of benefit fraud is endless and all require appropriate evidence to prove

fraud to the satisfaction of the Courts.

In my opinion, the Courts are far too lenient with benefit fraudsters. They tend to view this type of crime as victimless as it is public money but they do not realise that it is Tax Payers' money, i.e. yours and mine. Claimants caught defrauding the benefit system, in theory, have to repay any overpayment but in practice very little money is recovered and most, eventually, gets written off as it is too expensive to pursue.

The Benefits system is very complex and there are so many aspects to it that there is no simple way to streamline it. In my opinion VAPP needs a team to specialise in understanding the full implications and complexities of the benefits to be able to formulate clear policies on benefits and benefit fraud. Furthermore, VAPP also needs to consider how it will address the growing epidemic of fraud generally in society.

For more information, see:
<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>




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Letter to the Editors

BBC licence fee

With all the kerfuffle about Auntie trying to scrap the free licence for 75s and over, I have a better idea. The fee should be scrapped altogether.

We live in a digital age with hundreds of channels to choose from, plus streaming services like Netflix and Amazon.

The BBC also seems quite profligate with its money. High salaries for so called stars. (£1.75 million to talk about football. Really! You know who I mean.). Also, squillions to build a set for a second-rate soap. And, let's face it, they can hardly be called neutral when it comes to news; definitely slanted in some cases. So yes, if the Beeb can't survive without the licence fee then ho hum. I wonder: what does VAPP and anyone else think about this?

**From: Bobby Leyland,
Newark**

Introducing two selected VAPP election candidates

Mark Tunnicliff



Hello all, my name is Mark Tunnicliff and I am the VAPP Candidate for the constituency of Linlithgow and East Falkirk in Scotland.

Having served with the Royal Logistic Corps as a Communication Specialist for 13 years, I am now a CIPS qualified procurement officer and currently work for a private company, fully funded by the Scottish government, called Zero Waste Scotland. Even in my day job, I am constantly trying to change things for the better.

Scotland is a fantastic, beautiful place with a lot of scope for growth and opportunity.

With regards to politics, for me this means the chance to be an MP for both the UK in our Westminster Parliament and for the Scottish Parliament in Holyrood. The current SNP MP holds both positions and I also intend to stand for both.

I believe in truth, true freedom of speech and that without parties like ours, people have little or no option but to accept the same old broken politics.

Being a family man with a very supportive wife of almost 10 years and a daughter who has just turned 26 months old, my motivation is to create a better future for my daughter, my family and the whole of the UK.

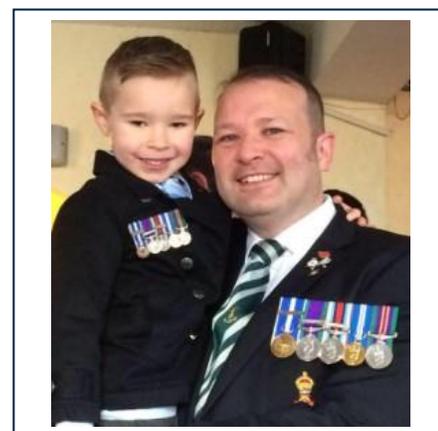
Like many veterans, I have served in Iraq, Afghanistan and with the United Nations, I can truly say my dedication to the UK is, and always has been, one of my top priorities.

I sincerely hope the voters will give me the opportunity to serve them once again, albeit in a different capacity, in order to make the difference needed for positive change in the UK.

Get in touch if you are interested in being involved and creating change for the future. You can find us on Facebook at: [Linlithgow and East Falkirk VAPP](#), one of the best local platforms for constant communications, posts, etc.

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Lee Cartwright



My name is Lee Cartwright and I was born in the sunny town of Hartlepool located in the North-east of England.

I grew up with my two sisters and my loving mother and father in Hartlepool and I attended English Martyrs School.

I joined the British Army at 17 years and 6 months and completed my Basic Training at ATR¹ Glencourse in Scotland.

Having passed out as 'Best Recruit' in 1997, I then went on to complete my Infantry training in ITC² Catterick where I achieved the 'best shot' award.

I joined the 1st Battalion The Green Howards in Osnabruck, Battlesbury Barracks in Germany. I served in Norway, Denmark, Canada, Poland, and Kosovo; I was then posted back to England, Then we were deployed to Northern Ireland for two years before returning to England. On the 06/06/2006 The Green Howards became the 2nd Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment. Then I had a few more postings across England and my final operational tour to Afghanistan.

Prior to my tour of Afghanistan, I was privileged enough to marry my beautiful wife Laura in Sorrento, Italy. The wedding was the second best day of my life, the first being the birth of my son William, who came along two years later.

It was an outstanding day and all of our immediate family including Laura's father Bill, who

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¹ Army Training Regiment
² Infantry Training Centre

we later lost to cancer, were able to make the long trip over.

As mentioned, I left the Army in 2011 and I was fortunate to get a job as a Health & Safety Manager. Being home and now living in Hartlepool with my wife, we decided to have a family of our own.

My little boy William was born on the 21st March 2013. He is an absolute 'godsend' and part of the reason I ended up applying for VAPP. Having now lived in the town for quite some time it was apparent to me that the current local Labour representatives had not been living up to their promises.

Over the last few years I have seen crime rates in Hartlepool go through the roof. They are still rising, Additionally, our local Hospital is under threat as most of its departments are now closed.

I felt that I couldn't just stand by and watch this happen. Some residents in my ward had taken to patrolling the streets to help reassure the local people, This 'should not' and 'is not' the answer for the residents of Hartlepool. in my humble opinion, the old parties (Labour and Conservative) are no longer in touch with the electorate of Hartlepool.

I hope to help move Hartlepool forward by listening to the residents of Hartlepool and telling them the TRUTH.

With the backing of the Veterans' and People's Party, I aspire to enable progressive change in areas such as the local NHS Hospital and Policing, additionally supporting other proposals of the Manifesto in the town of Hartlepool.

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