

POPPYSCOTLAND AND PSYBT HELP GET VETERANS NEW CAREER OFF THE GROUND

Poppyscotland, the organisation behind the Scottish Poppy Appeal, and the Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust (PSYBT) have helped make two young veterans' career dreams come true.

Alasdair Macnair, 25, from Stirling, who saw active service in Iraq with the Royal Engineers, was awarded a small business loan to help him launch his chosen career as a forestry contractor.

Andrew Crawford, also 25, from Greenock, served in the RAF from 2001 to 2006 and was awarded a loan to set himself up as a self-employed photographer and DJ.

The loans were awarded on the same day as part of a new initiative, to help ex-Service men and women get their business ideas off the ground in a time of global financial downturn. Poppyscotland and PSYBT are working in partnership to support young veterans in Scotland.

PSYBT supports the applicant in producing his or her business plan and cash flow forecast. If an applicant has served in the Armed Forces, then Poppyscotland will join the award panel meeting and will then decide whether to contribute finance to the applicant's business idea and at what level. PSYBT provides all ongoing support for the candidate and the applicant repays the loan to both organisations.

Alasdair said: "The help from Poppyscotland and PSYBT has been invaluable in providing a strong foundation for my business. The loan will help me to purchase essential tools and equipment, including a vehicle and power tools.

"It has always been my dream to run my own business and I chose to work in forestry because I like working outdoors, it keeps me fit and there is a lot of variety in my job. Each day is different – from felling and planting trees, maintaining forest areas, to spraying chemicals and building and repairing fences."

Poppyscotland Chief Executive Jim Panton explained that it can sometimes be difficult for young veterans to readjust to civilian life and that schemes like this enable them to reach their full potential. He said: "We fully appreciate and commend the boldness of anyone starting up their own business and recognise the challenges facing all entrepreneurs today. Coming out of a military environment into a small business setup requires a huge adjustment and we are delighted to be helping Alasdair and Andrew to get these very promising business going."

Mark Strudwick, Chief Executive of PSYBT commented, "People leaving the Forces have so many skills that can easily be transferred into an enterprise. It is crucial that they receive the help and support of experienced business advisers to help with the business planning and sector research to turn their bright ideas into reality. PSYBT are delighted to be working with Poppyscotland to offer this support to young veterans."

The initiative is open to anyone who has served in the Armed Forces. Veterans wishing to apply for a small business loan can obtain further information by contacting Poppyscotland's Charitable Services Co-ordinator on 0131 550 1568.

Ends

Poppyscotland

Please contact Leigh Howieson on 0131 550 1580

PSYBT

Please contact Margaret Gibson or Louise Moore on Tel no. 0141 248 4999 or visit the PSYBT website at www.psybt.org.uk.

Notes to editors:

Poppyscotland supports veterans and their families living in Scotland. Money raised through the annual Scottish Poppy Appeal and other fundraising activities is spent in the following ways:

- Direct financial assistance to individuals
- Funding advice services to the veterans' community
- Supporting organisations that deliver specialist support to veterans
- Supporting the employment of veterans

Visit www.poppyscotland.org.uk

PSYBT was launched in January 1989 and is a national organisation with offices in 18 Regions across Scotland. To date 8673 (10,540 proprietors) businesses have been assisted with £31.6m awarded - £28.2m (89%) in loans and £3.4m (11%) in grants.

Visit www.psybt.org.uk