Chair's Annual Report 2024/2025
Friends of S&WM(NS)ACF Trust AGM
1st April 2026

This annual report focuses on the 2025/26 agreed aims and covers the period 1st January – 31st December 2025 and has been completed with the help of the previous the Chair. The aims were:-

- Appoint a permanent Chair and Treasurer for the Trust during the summer of 2025
- All Trustees to fully engage with the Trust's secure digital platform
- Trustees to carry out a minimum of two Detachment visits during the 2025/26 year
- Continue to meet the emerging needs of the Cadets and adult volunteers
- Increase financial income to at least £25,000 in the 2025/26 year
- Support a minimum of 2 cadets or adult volunteers into a Higher Education programme at the University of Staffordshire

I, and the Trustees, are indebted to Jonathan Dale who stepped into the role of interim Chair, as an emergency measure due to the previous Chair, Graham Morley being seriously ill, between January 2025 and May 2025. Graham returned as Chair from May for the remainder of the year. I took over as Chair from 1st January 2026 and wish to thank the Trustees for the help and support provided to me since I took office. Thank you also to the previous Chair, Graham Morley, and the previous Vice Chair Kate Farmer for their service. I also thank Toby Gaddum, for undertaking the role of Vice-Chair as from 1st January 2026 and Linda Morley, Clerk, for the minutes. Graham will continue as a Trustee until the end of March 2026, to affect a smooth transition, and Kate will continue as a Trustee for the foreseeable future. Another development in the Trust governance implemented in 2025 has been the appointment of Gary White to the role of Treasurer, taking over from Mohammed Khuram who stepped in to temporarily cover the role following the unforeseen resignation of the previous Treasurer in late 2024. Thanks to Mohammed for his invaluable contribution.

Additional governance developments, implemented from 1st October 2025, were;

- The previous Honorary President, Mr Graham Stow CBE DL, became formally recognised as our founder
- Our previous Patron, Sir Ian Dudson KCVO CBE, was appointed as Honorary President
- His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire Prof Liz Barnes became our Patron.

Administrative arrangements have been strengthened to ensure that each of the above are more able to keep abreast of developments and thereby free to offer informed advice and guidance at their discretion. For the first time in the Trusts history, the Honorary Colonel of S&WM(NS)ACF has been added to this group. Whilst these individuals are not Trustees with voting rights, it is envisaged that their input and influence will ensure that the successful development of the Trust.

It has been one of our objectives for some time to reduce the age profile of the Trustees and this currently stands at 57.7yrs. This will fall further to 52.2yrs as from April 2026 when Graham resigns as Trustee, more than 10yrs lower than at the start of the initiative in 2021. This no longer warrants a specific aim of the Trust, but rather it should continue to be monitored to ensure the maintenance of this lower age profile is maintained. Trustee attendance through 2025/26 has been good with no Trustee giving any cause for concern and the Google platform, implemented to provide a more secure and effective operating environment, is now fully operational and working extremely well.

A highlight of the year was the Summer Camp in August 2025 during which the Trustees were able to witness first-hand the positive impact of our contributions and to meet with the ACF Senior Team and the Cadets. It is pleasing to note that opportunities for the Trustees to meet with the Senior Team and Adult Volunteers are much increased than in previous years. This enable Trustees to have a better understanding of operational issues and enhances the awareness of the Trust across the S&WM(NS)ACF.

A key challenge facing the Trustees in 2025 was the move of the Annual Dinner from the Potters Club in Stoke-on-Trent to the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA). Positive feedback indicated that this was a great success and I thank all those who helped with the organisation and the University of Staffordshire for their sponsorship of this event. The Trust has agreed that the Annual Dinner will again be at the NMA on Saturday 9th May 2026. One of the issues we faced at the Potters Club was that we had grown the attendance to the maximum the venue would hold. Whilst attendance at the 2025 was only slightly higher than that in 2024, the use of the NMA enables us to grow considerably and it is proposed that this is incorporated within our targets for 2026.

I'm delighted to report that the second annual Festive drinks reception was a success with a total of £1,507 raised, representing a significant increase on 2024 (£450). The venue for this moved from the Potters Club to Lunar at Wedgwood. The Trustees will be required to decide the location of the Christmas 2026 event, and it is proposed that the development of this event is incorporated within our targets for 2026.

One of the 2025 aims that has proved challenging is the development of linkages with the S&WM(NS)ACF Companies and Detachments. Whilst some of this has taken place, this still needs attention during 2026 and consequently a revised approach has been agreed by the Trustees at its January 2026 meeting. It is proposed that an aim related to this is maintained during 2026/27.

It is pleasing to note that the Trustees are now receiving regular, and appropriate, requests for funding from the Commandant and the internal processes within the ACF that support this request flow are much better developed. To better support this, the Trustees have developed their own recording systems to track approvals and will, in 2026 develop appropriate estimated budgets to aid effective target-setting for financial income. Grants made to the S&WM(NS)ACF in 2025 totalled £22,005, reflected in the below finance graph, and included the flowing items:

- Annual Scrapbook Challenge
- Cadet of the Year
- Adult Volunteer of the Year
- Cadet Boots
- Flutes for the Corps of Drums
- Hardship/hygiene/welfare items
- Malta Splash
- A digital camera
- Adult Volunteer Ski Training
- DofE Expedition food packs

In addition to the above, £10,000 was earmarked to support the Access to HE initiative but disappointingly, no Cadets/Adult Volunteers come forward despite significant internal messaging. The Trustees will review the continuation of this initiative at its AGM in March 2026.

The separate Treasurer's Report gives a detailed account of the Charity's finances, but it is worth mentioning that that the overall income to the Charity significantly increased from £20,787 in 2024 to £30,522 in 2025. Outgoings also increased from £26,694 in 2024 to £32,420, reflecting the increase events costs and the increase of grants made.

In summary, I conclude that despite the Trustees having to face some significant challenges during 2025, most of the agreed aims were achieved as detailed above. I can therefore confirm that the Trust continues to discharge that which it was set up to do during the past year. The achievements identified above have ensured that the Charity continues to meet the evolving needs of the S&WM(NS)ACF and are having a positive impact and there is no reason to think that this will not continue into the future.

Proposals

The following proposals for 2026/27 aims build on the aims and objectives of previous years, take into account the outcomes detailed above and address known emerging issues:-

- Significantly improve Trustee/Detachment links
- Continue to meet the emerging needs of the Cadets and adult volunteers
- Maintain financial income to at least £30,000 in the 2025/26 year
- Increase the number of attendees at the Annual Dinner and Festive Drinks Event in 2026
- Review the continuation of the Access to HE programme and if the decision supports the continuation, set achievable targets along with an associated budget

Victoria Hawley – Chair of the S&WM(NS)ACF Trust
1st April 2026