

Liberal Democrats recognise the vital role the UK's armed forces play in the defence of the nation and believe that it is the role of government to safeguard the interests of service personnel and veterans. We strongly support the Armed Forces Covenant, now enshrined in law in the 2011 Armed Forces Act. We also propose:

- ♦ Transferring the Office of the Veterans' Minister to the Cabinet Office, so that the services of all departments can be marshalled in support of veterans and creating a post of Veterans' Commissioner.
- ♦ Improving support for personnel and veterans with mental health problems, including alcohol dependency.
- ♦ Strengthening local military covenants by defining more exacting guidelines and ensuring best practice is rolled out across all Local Authorities.

The government in 2011 set a target for increasing the size of the Reserves to 30,000 but it is significantly behind in achieving this goal, with continued problems of retention. We acknowledge the different pressures that Reserves face and propose that:

- ♦ Emphasis be put on improving retention and training of Reserves at current levels.
- ♦ Employers be required to offer two weeks' unpaid leave annually to assist Reserves attending training camps.

11.3 Britain in Europe: prosperity and reform

Britain's membership of the EU is essential for creating a stronger economy and for projecting influence in the world. Millions of British jobs are linked to our trade with the EU, and being in Europe puts us on a more equal footing when negotiating trade deals with global players like the USA and China and in countering security threats. A modernised EU is crucial to responding to the global challenges Britain faces, whether they are climate change, cross-border crime and terrorism, or conflict.

If the UK were to leave the EU, trade rules would be made without us, our voice would not be heard in climate change negotiations and our borders would be more vulnerable. There is no doubt the UK would be poorer and weaker if we walked away from our closest neighbours and most trusted allies and left the EU.

But that does not mean that the institutions and policies of the European Union are perfect and do not need reform. Liberal Democrats are the party of reform whether that is in Westminster, Holyrood, the Senedd or in local Councils and the EU is no exception.