



Ministry of Defence
Veterans Fergus Secretariat
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facsimile transmittal

Susan
Veterans file
please - d/s

To: Fergus Devitt - NIE

Fax: 028 9052 8354

From: SPPolVeterans1

Date: 25/03/02

Re: Concessionary Travel for War
Disabled Pensioners

Pages: 1+5

CC: SPPolVets/DD

☐ Urgent☐ For Review☐ Please Comment☐ Please Reply☐ Please Recycle

Notes: Fergus.

X Thank you for your invitation to attend the 'Launch of the Victim's Strategy' on 11.04.02. I should advise that Mike Sands the Deputy Director here is away from the office until 04.04.02 and we will advise you then if we are able to attend.

You may be interested to see the following letter from Keith Walsh to the Chief Executive of the War Pensions Agency dated 25 February. I am advised by Alan Burnham's office that progress has been made in this area and that the MoD Veterans Affairs Secretariat will also approach other Devolved Administrations and the Local Government Association in England with a view to introducing similar schemes in their areas of responsibility.

We look forward to meeting a representative from your office at the Veterans Plenary on 17.04.02, please see the attached Programme. Grateful if you could confirm a name of a representative at your earliest opportunity.

Regards

Guy Brewer

Veterans Affairs Secretariat

Chris
this fax came in to me but
apart from X, the content and
backing papers are irrelevant
to you. Interesting typo
at the top of the page!

JD
27/3



Regional Development

Copy
Please include details in
Forum briefing notes - It would
be useful to get the
WPA to give background
on travel concessions in
England/Scotland/Wales
as well.
Mike

Mr Alan Burnham
Chief Executive
War Pensions Agency
Norcross
Blackpool
FY5 3WP

Transport (Policy & Support) Division
River House
48 High Street
BELFAST
BT1 2AR

Telephone: 028 9054 7691
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Email: keith.walsh@drdni.gov.uk

Your reference:
Our reference:

25 February 2002

Dear Mr Burnham,

NORTHERN IRELAND CONCESSIONARY FARES SCHEME: FREE TRAVEL FOR WAR DISABLED PENSIONERS

I am writing to establish whether the War Pensions Agency would be prepared to give my Department access to its database of War Disabled Pensioners under the age of 65, who are resident in Northern Ireland, in order to provide them with information about the availability of an improved travel concession.

Tomorrow, the Minister for Regional Development will announce that the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme is to be extended to provide free travel on public transport for War Disabled Pensioners under the age of 65. I attach a copy of the proposed Press Release.

On 1 October 2001, the concession for War Disabled Pensioners aged 65 and over was increased from a half-fare to free travel, in line with all other senior citizens of that age. The Minister has now decided that all War Disabled Pensioners should be treated the same and, from 1 May 2002, War Disabled Pensioners under the age of 65 will have their half-fare concession increased to free travel.

To implement this initiative, my Department wishes to write to all War Disabled Pensioners under the age of 65, who are resident in Northern Ireland, inviting them to apply for a new smartcard type of concession pass. This pass will operate with new automatic ticket machines to provide free travel on bus and rail services in Northern Ireland from 1 May next. We are seeking an agreement with

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your Agency to access your database of names and addresses for this purpose. You may wish to note that we have established a similar agreement with the Social Security Agency to make available application forms for free travel to all senior citizens over the age of 65 in Northern Ireland.

I would welcome an early meeting with you to discuss the possibility of gaining access to your database. I hope that we can come to an arrangement to bring this worthwhile benefit to the relevant holders of a War Disablement Pension.

Yours sincerely,



Keith Walsh

MINISTER ANNOUNCES FREE TRAVEL FOR WAR DISABLED PENSIONERS

Regional Development Minister Peter Robinson MP MLA today announced that he is extending his successful free travel initiative to include those under the age of 65 who are in receipt of a War Disabled Pension.

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Mr Robinson said that those who have been disabled while serving their country during times of war have always been considered particularly deserving within the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme.

He said: "When I introduced my free travel scheme on 1 October last year, War Disabled Pensioners aged 65 and over automatically received the benefit by virtue of their age, but those under 65 continued to receive only a half-fare concession. I am now able to rectify this anomaly.

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"Arrangements are being made for War Disabled Pensioners under 65 to receive, free of charge, a new smartcard pass, similar to that being provided to senior citizens. Translink will be issuing further details shortly. This pass will entitle the holder to free travel on public transport from 1 May 2002."

Mr Robinson also said he is giving consideration to widening the Concessionary Fares Scheme to include other categories of people with disabilities, subject to the normal budgetary processes.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- The Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme is administered by the Department for Regional Development. Since its introduction in 1978, it has provided free travel for people who are registered blind and half-fare travel for people aged 65 and over, War Disabled Pensioners and children up to the end of their compulsory schooling at age 16. On 1 October 2001, free travel was introduced for men and women aged 65 and over.
- The War Pensions Agency have advised that there are only 1686 War Disabled Pensioners under the age of 65 who are resident in Northern Ireland. No more than 200 of these hold Translink concession passes entitling them to half-fares. It is estimated that the additional cost of extending free travel to this group could be around £20,000 per annum. The Department of Finance and Personnel has agreed that this extra cost can be met from within existing budgets.
- Translink is introducing a new ticketing system which will use smartcards. Senior citizens and War Disabled Pensioners will be the first passengers to use new SmartPasses to provide free travel, when the system comes into operation on 1 May 2002.

MEETING OF VETERANS' PLENARY FORUM - 17 APRIL 2002

PROGRAMME

- 09.30 - 10.15 REGISTRATION AND COFFEE
- 10.15 - 10.20 DELEGATES ASSEMBLE IN CARISBROOKE HALL
(to be seated by 10.25)
- 10.25 - 10.30 ADMINSTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS - Assistant Director
Service Personnel Policy (Veterans)
- 10.30 - 10.45 UPDATE ON SDR NEW CHAPTER ON INTERNATIONAL
TERRORISM AND FEEDBACK FROM THE VETERANS TASK
FORCE - Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Dr Lewis Moonie MP
- 10.45 - 11.05 UPDATE FROM THE NINE WORKING GROUPS - Director
Service Personnel Policy (Pensions and Veterans) Mr Jonathan
Iremonger, and Chairman COBSEO Major General Nigel
Richards CB OBE
- 11.05 - 11.35 COBSEO ACTIVITIES - Major General Richards CB OBE
- COBSEO 'WAY AHEAD' STUDY - Sir Patrick Brown KCB
- 11.35 - 11.55 CARE STANDARDS ACT - Speaker from The National Care
Standards Commission - National Minimum Standards for Care
Homes (DoH)
- 11.55 - 12.15 THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES - PLAYING THEIR PART IN THE
VETERANS' INITIATIVE - Brian Kitcher, Department of
Transport, Local Government and the Regions
- 12.15 - 13.30 OPEN FORUM - chaired by Major General Nigel Richards CB
OBE (Panel - speakers & DCDS(Pers))
- 13.30 - 14.45 LUNCH - Carisbrooke Hall and El Alamein Room
- 14.45 - 15.05 DEVELOPMENTS IN SERVICE PERSONNEL POLICY - Deputy
Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Marshal Sir Malcolm Pledger KCB
OBE AFC RAF
- 15.05 - 15.25 OPERATIONAL UPDATE - Speaker to be confirmed
- 15.25 - 15.45 TRI-SERVICE QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION - with Cdre PJ
Wilkinson RN, Brig NJ Cottam OBE & Air Cdre MJ Good RAF
- 15.50 CLOSE