

**EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL:**

**17 MARCH 2022**

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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & GOVERNANCE &  
MONITORING OFFICER**

**FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF CARDIFF**

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**Reason for this Report**

1. Council is requested to consider granting the Freedom of the City and County of Cardiff to HMS Cambria in recognition of its long and distinguished history as the Royal Navy's home in Wales and its pivotal role in training and deploying Royal Naval Reservists to support the Royal Navy at sea and ashore, at home and abroad.

**Background**

2. The City and County of Cardiff has bestowed the Honorary Freedom of the City to 62 individuals and 11 organisations since its inception in 1886.

**Process**

3. On the 18 December 2008, Council approved the criteria set out below for conferring the honour of Freedom of the City to an individual, association or organisation as a means of acknowledging outstanding contribution made to the life of the City of Cardiff. Successful nominations need to meet at least one of the following:
  - a. an individual or organisation of outstanding and acknowledged merit, with close links to the City and County of Cardiff;
  - b. an individual or organisation who has made an outstanding and acknowledged contribution to the development of Cardiff, the Capital City for Wales;
  - c. an individual or organisation who demonstrates outstanding and acknowledged achievements on the international stage that have served to benefit the international community.

**The Nomination**

4. The nomination, approved by all the Political Group Leaders of the Council, is to grant HMS Cambria the Freedom of the City and County of Cardiff, in recognition of its long and distinguished history as the Royal

Navy's home in Wales and its pivotal role in training and deploying Royal Naval Reservists to support the Royal Navy at sea and ashore, at home and abroad.

5. The Royal Naval reserve is a part-time force of much-valued civilians from all walks of life who balance civilian life with a part-time Royal Navy Career. Together, this team of 3000 provides the Royal Navy with essential trained personnel at times of tension, humanitarian crisis or conflict. It is a unique force made up of trained, committed civilians from a hugely diverse range of backgrounds who support our Navy in protecting our nation's interests. That might mean anything from getting involved in conflict operations, to counter-terrorism and anti-piracy work. Reservists also provide security at sea and humanitarian assistance across the globe.
6. At the start of the 20th century, with a period of rapid naval expansion taking place, it was realised that the Royal Navy Reserve could not supply the required number of trained individuals. In response, a scheme was introduced that allowed individuals in civilian shore jobs unconnected with the sea to train on a part time basis at special shore establishments. This training provided invaluable experience of sailing with the fleet for a few weeks a year once a certain level of competence had been achieved.
7. Accordingly, in 1903 the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) was established. The RNVR was organised in divisions. However, due to the Second World War, the plan to establish a division in Cardiff in 1938 was not realised until 1947 when the South Wales Division RNVR was formed and based in a former foundry on the western side of East Dock, Cardiff and named HMS CAMBRIA.
8. In 1978, Associated British Ports gave notice that CAMBRIA's HQ in Cardiff was earmarked for demolition. Ex-army premises were found in Sully in a greenfield site overlooking the sea, half a mile from Barry Docks. Over four decades there were numerous attempts to return the division to the Capital. However, it was not until 2018 that the opportunity to return HMS CAMBRIA to Cardiff was realised.
9. A new building was designed to recognise the future roles of the Maritime Reserves and in July 2020, HMS Cambria, an £11 million purpose-built facility in the heart of Cardiff Bay was officially opened.
10. In 2022, as it marks its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, HMS Cambria provides the most modern of facilities for military personnel. Every week, up to 80 Royal Navy and Royal Marines Reservists use the state-of-the-art complex. The bespoke facility now serves as the central hub and operating base for the ship's company from HMS Cambria, personnel from Wales's University Royal Naval Unit (URNU) who look after student naval cadets at universities in the city and the Royal Marine Reserves (RMR)
11. Hailed as the 'crown jewel' of the Defence estate, the 4,000-square-metre building provides offices with up to 80 workspaces, training and classroom suites, a fitness room, large, multi-purpose dining room, and

short-term accommodation for up to 50 people. The facility is further supplemented by a parade square and a Royal Marines rope training area.

12. Beyond serving Reservists, the facility also serves as a focus for community engagement with the people of Wales and support visits to the Welsh capital by Royal Navy warship. Most recently, Reservists from HMS Cambria and the Royal Marines Reserve Unit in Cardiff have demonstrated their value during the pandemic, bringing a valuable blend of skills from their civilian jobs and their military experience to support the Welsh and UK Governments in their response to Covid. There are currently Cambrian Reservists mobilised in support of the Welsh Ambulance Service.
13. The move to the new facility marks the beginning of a new era and increased activity on and off the water by Royal Navy Reservists from Wales and the Southwest region as they develop their sea sense and waterborne skills to enable them to support the regular Royal Navy, be it in offshore patrol vessels around the coast of the UK or on humanitarian relief patrols in the Caribbean. It is hoped that the new facility will also inspire future potential reservists from the surrounding areas to sign up to become vital and valued members of the armed forces family.

### **Legal Implications**

14. The Freedom of the City is granted under Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972. This legislation provides that the Council may admit to be Honorary Freemen or Honorary Freewomen of the City and County of Cardiff, any “persons of distinction” and “persons who have, in the opinion of the Authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area”.
15. A resolution to admit Honorary Freemen or Honorary Freewomen must be passed at a specially convened meeting of the Council, where notice of the object of the meeting has been given and passed by not less than two-thirds of the Members of the Council who vote upon it.
16. The title of Honorary Freemen or Honorary Freewomen in Cardiff is purely honorary and does not confer any special rights or privileges.

### **Financial Implications**

17. Whilst, no specific budget provision has been set aside for this purpose, in the event of there being any financial costs arising from this decision, it will need to be found from within the existing budget allocation of the relevant service.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Council considers and agrees:

- (1) the admission as Honorary Freemen of the City and County of Cardiff of HMS Cambria under Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 in

recognition of its long and distinguished history as the Royal Navy's home in Wales and its pivotal role in training and deploying Royal Naval Reservists to support the Royal Navy at sea and ashore, at home and abroad.

- (2) that the Chief Executive be granted delegated authority to make suitable arrangements for the Freedom of the City to be ceremonially granted to HMS Cambria, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Lord Mayor.

**Davina Fiore**  
**Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer**  
**1 March 2022**

**Background Papers**  
Council Report: 18 December 2008