



## **Press release**

**For immediate release: 17 January**

### **RSABI and Former Royal Marines Launch Pioneering Mental Health Initiative**

Former Royal Marines and farming charity RSABI are working together to deliver a pioneering mental health initiative for Scottish agriculture, being rolled out from this month.

The ground-breaking Mental Health First Aid training is aimed at encouraging people to talk more freely about mental health, reducing stigma and improving understanding about what to look out for and how to respond when someone may be struggling.

The training is being delivered in a new partnership between RSABI, the charity which supports people in Scottish agriculture, and IED Training Solutions Ltd, an award-winning consultancy founded by former Royal Marines.

The initiative offers the opportunity for participants to gain certification in the SCQF Level 4 Award for First Aid for Mental Health Awareness and/or SCQF Level 5 Award in First Aid for Mental Health. The training will be aimed at organisations and individuals who work regularly in the front line with farmers or crofters, including those involved in assessments or inspections, consultants, and advisers.

The aim is to provide individuals with the knowledge to recognise a range of mental health conditions and know how to provide practical support for a person presenting with a mental health condition. The training will help participants to develop the skills to start a conversation and to be able to direct people to appropriate professional help. The skills learned will also help those who take part understand more about their own mental health.

Seven training courses have so far been delivered during a pilot phase, including five with assessors and staff from Food Integrity Assurance, who undertake assessments on behalf of both Quality Meat Scotland and Scottish Quality Crops.

Carol McLaren, Chief Executive of RSABI, said the innovative training could make a significant difference in the Scottish agricultural community: “There are many synergies between the Royal Marines and farming – from working in all weathers and challenging terrain to antisocial hours, time away from family and public scrutiny.

“This initiative comes at a time when there are some really encouraging green shoots of change as farmers and others working in agriculture become more open about talking about mental health and the steps needed to maintain and improve it.”

IED Training Solutions was set up in 2015 by former Royal Marine Ian Clark who said he and his team are excited to be working in collaboration with RSABI to deliver this important training initiative.

The company has extensive experience of delivering successful tailored Health and Wellbeing workshops to the rural sector.

“We have a great deal of respect and admiration for the work of the farming community to both provide food and look after the land,” said Mr Clark.

“During recent times some great work has been done in the Royal Marines to encourage a really positive approach to achieving good mental health and we are very much looking forward to sharing that experience with the farming community. I think this training, and the cascade effect of the benefit, could be a major step forward for the industry.”

Hugh Jones, a former Royal Marine with 35 years’ service, is leading on the delivery of the courses. He said: “It’s very important for farmers to recognise when they are starting to feel stressed and that they know about coping strategies such as taking a break, eating healthily and taking regular exercise. These steps can have an immensely positive effect on an individual.”

During the training Mr Jones also explains the signs to look out for when visiting farmers or crofters, saying that subtle changes could be an indication something is wrong: “Don’t hesitate to ask them how they are. Say if they don’t seem themselves and you are worried, and above all be kind – you wouldn’t believe how much impact that can have.”

Those interested in finding out more about the new mental health first aid training, including a video interview with Major Hugh Jones, should visit [www.rsabi.org.uk](http://www.rsabi.org.uk) to find out more or email [mentalhealthtraining@rsabi.org.uk](mailto:mentalhealthtraining@rsabi.org.uk) to register interest.

RSABI provides emotional support, including a free counselling service, as well as practical and financial support. The free, confidential support service is available 24/7 by calling 0808 1234 555 or using the webchat service on the RSABI website.

This initiative builds on the charity's #keeptalking campaign to encourage people to look out for each other during the winter months and a new Thrive mental health app which is being piloted with young farmers clubs.

Picture caption: Pictured during a farm visit are, from left, David Leggat, RSABI Trustee, Carol McLaren, RSABI Chief Executive and former Royal Marine Hugh Jones, IED Training Solutions, who will be leading on the delivery of the courses.

## Ends

For further information please contact Toni Dowling or Jacquelyn Whyte at Muckle Media on 07795248068/ 07753347395 or by emailing [RSABI@mucklemedia.co.uk](mailto:RSABI@mucklemedia.co.uk)

Alternative images are available to download here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/glf6qj2w257x0s/AAALRKD6TxOwl59Pbf8Ueh7ra?dl=0>

## Notes for editors:

- RSABI is a registered Scottish charity - No. SC009828
- RSABI provides emotional, practical, and financial support to people involved in Scottish agriculture. Support is provided in confidence.
- RSABI has a Freephone helpline supported by RHASS which is open 365 days, 24 hours a day – 0808 1234 555
- RSABI is celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Find out more here: <https://rsabi.org.uk/viewItem.php?id=2957>
- RSABI runs a supporters' scheme offering individual, business, and corporate membership. Information on joining the Supporter Scheme can be found here: <https://www.rsabi.org.uk/Our-Supporter-Scheme>
- RSABI has an online shop offering a range of items for sale [rsabi.org.uk](https://rsabi.org.uk)
- RSABI's Registered Office is at The Rural Centre, West Mains of Ingliston, Newbridge, Midlothian EH28 8LT