

News Release: Wednesday, June 20th 2018; *for immediate release*

POPPYSCOTLAND INVERNESS CELEBRATES ITS FIFTH BIRTHDAY

Poppyscotland's pioneering welfare centre in Inverness today celebrated its fifth birthday with the positive news that it has dealt with more than 3,000 enquiries since 2013 and taken up nearly 400 separate welfare cases.

With an estimated Armed Forces community of 100,000 in the north of Scotland, Poppyscotland identified a need for the creation of a welfare centre where veterans and their families could drop in at any point to receive help and advice. And drop in they have at a rate of nearly a dozen a week.

The Centre's manager, Nina Semple, said: "Given the thousands of people that have come through our door since 2013, it is clear that Poppyscotland's Inverness Welfare Centre has become an integral part of the area in terms of the help and advice that we are giving to members of the Armed Forces community each and every day.

"We know that Armed Forces veterans sometimes find it difficult to ask for assistance in the first place. A person-centred and holistic approach allows beneficiaries to take ownership of their issues. With support from expert staff, they can develop a better understanding of what has caused the issues, decide how it can best be resolved and, most importantly, take the steps necessary to ensure that it does not arise again."

Joining the Poppyscotland team at the celebratory event were a number of veterans and beneficiaries, along with local dignitaries and members of The MacRobert Trust, an organisation that has generously supported the Centre since it opened. In recognition of the Trust's ongoing support for Poppyscotland across the country, the Strothers Lane facility was also renamed "The MacRobert Centre".

The MacRobert Trust's Chief Executive, Rear Admiral Chris Hockley, who was joined by his wife Kate, said: "The MacRobert Trust is delighted to have supported the Inverness Centre since its inception and we are particularly pleased about the renaming. This enforces our determination to work alongside Poppyscotland to make a real difference to those in our Armed Forces community who are seeking guidance and advice.

"I can only say that I am in awe of what has been achieved here in Inverness in the past five years. This is a journey and we hope that Poppyscotland MacRobert Centres will ultimately become synonymous with such vital assistance across Scotland."

Poppyscotland CEO Mark Bibbey said: "Poppyscotland's aim in the past five years was to set ourselves up as the heart of the welfare service offering in the north of Scotland. The key to fulfilling that role has been the opening of the centre and the great success it has enjoyed. None of that would have been possible if not for the welcoming atmosphere that this centre exudes, which is down to the fantastic staff and volunteers."

One of the hundreds to have been helped by the Poppyscotland team in Inverness is James Garrick, who served in the Gordon Highlanders for 24 years, leaving in 2003. He served in Bosnia and Northern Ireland. James first visited the Centre in July 2014 and outlined multiple health issues (diabetes, osteoarthritis, varicose veins, sciatica, deafness and mobility difficulties) and significant psychiatric health (PTSD, social isolation, anxiety and depression).

James, who visits the Centre on a regular basis, received a grant from Poppyscotland in order to attend a session with an occupational therapist and he was given funding for a bed/mattress and for an Electric Powered Vehicle which is helping to alleviate some of the issues and social isolation around his mobility difficulties. He has also participated in a Lifestyle Management Course for Veterans, aimed at helping those with long-term health issues manage their conditions.

James said: “Life was and still is tough for me, but the help I have received from the Poppyscotland team in Inverness has been overwhelming. I honestly do not know where I would be without them. They have helped me so much and I would urge any of my fellow veterans to get in touch with Poppyscotland Inverness if they are struggling.”

Nina added: “While today has been about celebrating what has been achieved in the past five years, we are also conscious that we are always on the lookout for new volunteers. Volunteering with Poppyscotland makes a real difference to the lives of the Armed Forces community in Scotland, but we need more ‘Poppy People’ to join our team. Our incredible volunteers are the lifeblood of Poppyscotland and whatever your background or skills you’ll find volunteering with us rewarding and fun. Please get in touch.”

For more information or to chat about this great opportunity, please contact Sally McNaught, Deputy Head of Fundraising at Poppyscotland, on **0131 550 1559**, or e-mail at volunteer@poppyscotland.org.uk.

ENDS...

Notes to editors

- For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact David A. Findlay, PR Manager at Poppyscotland, on **0131 550 1580** or **079797 35611**, or email at d.findlay@poppyscotland.org.uk.
- Images are free to use. Where possible, please credit: **Highland Dreams Photography**
- For more information about the Poppyscotland Inverness Welfare Centre please visit www.poppyscotland.org.uk/get-help/advice/inverness-welfare-centre/
- Welfare cases: **390**
- Welfare enquiries: **1,023**
- General enquiries: **2,994**
- *Statistics are up to end of May 2018*
- Poppyscotland provides life-changing support to the Armed Forces community. Money raised from the Scottish Poppy Appeal and Poppyscotland's year-round fundraising enables them to deliver support to members of the Armed Forces community in Scotland by providing tailored funding and assistance. The charity also funds services in advice, employment, housing, mental health, mobility and respite. Please note that we are known as "Poppyscotland", and not "PoppyScotland" or "Poppy Scotland". For more information, please visit us at: www.poppyscotland.org.uk.