

Annual Report 2007/08

Advisory Committee on Conscientious Objectors

The Advisory Committee on Conscientious Objectors is a Non Departmental Public Body. ACCO was established by administrative action in 1970. The responsibility of the committee is to advise the Secretary of State for Defence regarding all claims to conscientious objection to further service in the Armed Forces. These claims are made by officers and other ranks of the Armed Forces whose application for permission to retire or to resign their commissions or for discharge have been refused by the Service authorities. The committee does not exist, to consider cases of conscientious objection to conscription or call-up on mobilization for war. Many of the conscientious objections are due to religious beliefs.

The Committee members work on a part-time basis. It consists of 6 people all of which are appointed by the Department for Constitutional affairs. The Chair and Deputy Chair must be legally qualified and there are also 4 lay members. When the Committee is required to meet it must consist of with the Chair or Deputy Chair and 2 lay members. MOD civil servants provide secretariat support.

The ACCO first sat in 1971. Since it first sat the committee has heard 36 appeals. Of the 36 appeals 12 have been successful. Since 1991 the committee has only been required to meet on 2 occasions, the last of these being in July 1996. Meetings for the Committee are infrequent.

The former Vice Chair, His Honour Judge Harris, was appointed Chair on 02nd September 2003. The position of Vice Chair was filled by His Honour Judge Lawrence on 02nd September 2003. The appointment for the Vice Chair is until 11th January 2012. However, in March 2007 the Chair decided to resign. Communication with the Ministry of Justice has been going on since December 2006 to get a new Chair appointed. This is currently with the Lord Chancellor's office awaiting them to appoint someone.

The Committee structure is shown below:

Chair	His Honour Judge Harris
Vice Chair	His Honour Judge Lawrence
Lay Members	Mr A G Corless CBE Mr C M Lake Mrs L L Phipps Mr K N Walton

The lay members appointments expired on 30th April 2007. We went through the process of re-appointing them. All four lay members were reappointed and the appointments now expire on 30th April 2012.

The members are only paid when their services are required. The current daily rate is £350 for the Chair and Vice Chair, the lay members are paid £198.

The Committee conducts all of its hearings in public.

If people have any enquiries concerning the Committee they should contact the Secretary whose contact details are below:

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Miss Y Moore
Secretary