

Leveard 17/11/10

Ex-servicemen vote to keep their club a male-only environment

KURT BAYER

A GROUP of veterans have blocked a move to allow women to join their social club.

The Perth & District Ex-Servicemen's Club has been criticised by anti-sexist campaigners for refusing membership to women, including former female soldiers.

The former servicemen voted against allowing women members at a special meeting on Monday night.

It was expected that the club, which boasts about 2000 members and 14 committee members, would approve the move when discussed at an Extraordinary General Meeting at its Brown Street headquarters on Monday night.

Ronnie Inkster, secretary of the club, said: "Members



REACTION: Karen Dargo of Engender was disappointed.

voted for the status quo by a majority vote, so nothing changes.

"While everyone had an opinion on this and there was the usual argy-bargy, I think most people are happy with the outcome."

Karen Dargo, of anti-sexism group Engender, said: "It is sad that the members have voted in this way. This was an opportunity to

fully recognise the contribution of women in the forces and bring new members in.

"The number of ex-service women is only going to increase as women take on more roles in the UK forces, and the issue of their status in individual clubs like this will be challenged again."

The club's committee had recommended the move, in order to update its constitution in line with Government guidelines on discrimination and inclusion.

Ahead of the meeting, Mr Inkster had said the move gave the club a chance to update its constitution.

He said: "The Government now says you are not allowed to discriminate, and that includes having a men-only bar in the place.

"We've had ladies apply in the past but it was thrown out because the

old constitution of the club was against it.

"But there is so much new legislation coming out now that you don't know where you stand."

In the British Army, nearly 70% of jobs are open to women.

While the ban on female membership was upheld by majority, not all members were happy with the move.

One club member, who did not wish to be named, said: "This is a shameful decision by a group of veterans who should know better, and should be doing more to enhance equality in our society.

"There was only about 40 members out of nearly 2000 who voted on this and spoke for the whole club."

The ex-servicemen's club has been based at the Brown Street premises in central Perth since 1978.