



## Central News – January 2025

Sharing operational information, engagement opportunities and news with RBL Counties/Districts, Branches and Sections around the world

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Important dates	
14 January 2025	Annual Conference registration opens
17 January 2025	RBL National Election nominations deadline
14 February 2025	Annual Conference 2025 motion submissions deadline
14 February 2025	Annual Membership Awards 2025 nominations deadline
11 April 2025	Nominations for Place of Conference 2025 deadline

## Looking ahead 2025 and beyond

As we start an exciting new year, we take a moment to share updates on some key improvements and projects. [On MAP](#), you'll find a simple slide deck outlining the **Membership Improvement Plan**, its purpose, project updates and accomplishments. You'll also be able to see a high-level overview of work that the Membership Council and their working groups/sub-committees are undertaking.

We have reprioritised improvement initiatives that the Membership Directorate are working to deliver from November 2024, these are important areas members want us to get right: Engagement; Communication; Experience (including joining/renewal improvements); Finance (including Internet Banking); Branch Offer (including Branch Community Support rollout); and Clubs.

We're excited to continue building on these foundation improvements. We'll be using our member engagement events to gather new ideas that will further enhance your experience and streamline services.

**Thank you for being a vital part of our community**, we couldn't do what we do without you! Together, we achieved so much in 2024, and we've already started work to make significant strides in enhancing the way we support you, so that you can be there for our Armed Forces community. [Watch some of our highlights of our incredible past year here.](#)

Say tuned for more updates in the coming months, and feel free to reach out if you have any questions, feedback or suggestions: [membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk)

## RBL.Community accounts

We're pleased to announce that following a successful pilot, **we are providing all qualifying officers with RBL.Community accounts this year!** All those in eligible roles without an account will be contacted by email soon, with information of how to register. Emails are also being standardised in format and as a consequence some email accounts will be phased out. All affected

users will be contacted in due course along with information on what support they may require.

### Which roles are eligible for an account?

#### County / District Level:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- CCSC
- CRO
- CYO
- CTO
- Assistant CTO
- Parade Marshal
- Standard Bearer
- President
- Events
- Women's Section
- Regional Rep

#### Branch level:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Standard Bearer
- Point of Contact 1
- Point of Contact 2
- BCC
- Group Rep
- Events
- \* Membership Secretary
- \* Webmaster

*\*Please note the criteria for these roles are currently under review and subject to a decision by the Membership Council.*

Officers without an account should contact their Membership Engagement Officer (MEO) to register. Those not on the above list but holding RBL.Community email accounts will be contacted early this year regarding next steps.

### Internet banking

**2025 will see our phased roll out of Lloyds internet banking to branches.** Internet banking is not mandatory, but we're keen to gauge the expected uptake ahead of the rollout. If your branch is interested, please kindly [complete this short survey](#), to indicate interest.

A separate formal internet banking registration process will be required to proceed as the rollout commences on a region-by-region basis in 2025. Look out for further information in your regional newsletter when the rollout reaches your region.

### Last chance to nominate for National Elections

Thinking of putting yourself forward for RBL National Elections? **There's still time this month for branches to submit their nominations for RBL's National Elections!** We're looking for our next:

- National Chair
- National Vice Chair

- Three new trustees for the Board of Trustees
- 12 representatives for the Membership Council

If you believe you have the skills, knowledge and capacity to represent RBL in any of these roles, please register your interest in being nominated with your branch in good time for them to make the final submission deadline. The deadline for branches to submit nominations is 5:00pm on **17th January 2025**.

Full details of the elections process have been shared with all voting branches or are [available on our website](#). If you are a Branch Chair and are unsure of the process or have not been contacted by your branch Elections Point of Contact, please contact your Membership Engagement Officer or the RBL Governance Team at [elections@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:elections@britishlegion.org.uk).

### Looking ahead to Annual Conference

Ringling in the New Year means we're just five months away from Annual Conference 2025 in Harrogate. **Registration opens next Tuesday** (14th of January) via [the RBL website](#) and closes 30th of March for in-person attendees and on 22nd of April for virtual attendees.

Please note that the deadline for Nominations for Place of Conference is 5pm Friday 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2025; not 5pm 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2025 as stated in a recent communication to County Chairs. We are also pleased to publish the revised Standing Orders for Annual Conference [on MAP](#).

### Annual Conference Evening Entertainment

We're delighted to announce that RBL North and East Yorkshire County will host an evening concert in the glorious Royal Hall at Harrogate Convention Centre on Saturday 17th May, from 7:00pm.

The wonderful Humberside Police Concert Band, the country's oldest continually-performing police band and big supporters of RBL, will perform music with something for everyone – be it military, dance or sing-along tunes. No booking needed; we hope to see you all there!



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### Annual Membership Awards

We're delighted that the Annual Membership Awards are returning for Conference 2025, allowing us

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<sup>1</sup> Photo credit Humberside Police Concert Band

to come together and celebrate the incredible hard work and success of our dedicated members, officers, branches, counties, districts and sections. All winners (or their representatives) will be awarded with a plaque on stage as we celebrate and mark their achievements together.

We encourage you to [submit your nominations](#) by 14th February – there is nothing to be lost and everything to gain! You can view a list of awards and their criteria on pages 4 and 5 of the application form [available on MAP](#). Please send your applications in to Membership Services at [membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk).

### Discounts and offers

If you're planning to attend Annual Conference in person, be sure to look at the discounts and offers available through [the Harrogate Convention Centre's website](#). These are available for travel, accommodation, dining out, shopping and more in and around Harrogate. For travel to and from Harrogate by train with LNER, discounted tickets are available through the website using discount code **HCC25**, following the instructions and T&Cs.

### Consolidated Payments Form

Does your branch submit consolidated payments? If so, please note that a new Consolidated Payments Form is [now available on MAP](#). This updated form has been issued to accommodate new requirements from the rollout of Lloyds internet banking to branches in early 2025. Please do ensure you use the new version of the form to avoid any delay in processing, thank you.

### Nominations for New Year's Honours 2026

RBL's National President chairs an Honours Committee which makes recommendations to the Ministry of Defence of individuals who may be considered for a public honour because they have made an exceptional contribution to the charity and our beneficiaries.

County Presidents and County Chairs are invited to submit their nominations for The King's New Year's Honours 2026. If you're interested in putting a candidate forward to your County President or Chair, please speak to them before the end of the month (January 2025).

Nominations for those retired can only be accepted if the Honours List in which they will be published in, runs within 12 months from the date of retirement from the RBL. Whilst we will of course welcome citations for nominees approaching retirement, we strongly encourage those for members of staff, volunteers and Legion members who have displayed an exceptional contribution to the work of the RBL, going above and beyond their typical duties.

If you're a County Chair, please refer to the guidance and documentation shared by Scherri Wilson,

Interim Executive Assistant, on 11th December 2024. If you're a County President, please liaise with your County Chair. Thank you.

## Remembering the end of the Second World War

### Share your stories

2025 marks 80 years since the end of the Second World War (WWII), with Victory in Europe (VE) Day on 8 May and Victory over Japan (VJ) Day on 15 August. RBL is planning events to mark these momentous anniversaries to ensure that the service and sacrifice of the WWII generation is always remembered.

Everyone in modern Britain has a connection to those who served during WWII, either through their family or community heritage. RBL activities will thank surviving veterans and pay tribute to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and lost their lives, without whom the way of life we enjoy today would not have been possible.

[A form is available on our website](#) for people to submit their stories of service in the Second World War, memories of VE and VJ Day, and to express interest in attending events in 2025. We want to hear from you, and we need your help to spread the word amongst WWII veterans and their families in your community.

### Community Remembrance Resources

To help you engage with your community we are again producing free-standing display units that will explore the themes we're commemorating in 2025:

- The end of WWII, featuring an overview and veteran case studies and imagery.
- Teaching Remembrance Learning programme, featuring information on events and resources available to teachers and educators.

The display units will be available as:

- An easily assembled four-sided tower which, at 2.5m high, would form a great talking point at an event.
- One- and two-sided pull up banners.

A large poster and/or a leaflet on these themes will also be available. Additionally, a range of free downloadable resources will be on offer, designed to enable groups to confidently engage with communities and provide ideas for outreach and suggestions for activities and events. Bespoke resources with an educational focus for non-teaching adults to engage with young people will be

offered as well.

We're looking forward to making these resources available in early March 2025 – more information on how to order will follow in Central News.

## A day at the Grand Military Gold Cup

Come and show your support for our Surrey Standard Bearers at Sandown Park Racecourse's Grand Military Gold Cup Day, Friday 24th January 2025! The Grand Military Gold Cup Day, has run since 1841, providing opportunities for military riders to perform on a grand stage and, more generally, is a celebration of the three Armed Forces who protect us.

Tickets are available at a reduced price of just £5 per person when using **RBBL25** at checkout for all those who have served, are friends or family of service personnel, or who have an active RBL membership. Sandown Park is based in Esher, Surrey – less than an hour's train ride from London Waterloo, and less than 10 minutes' drive from the A3. [Get you tickets on their website.](#)

## Thank you for your support of the Poppy Appeal 2024

The Poppy Appeal team would like to say a huge thank you to you all for supporting the 2024 Poppy Appeal. We had an incredible campaign, distributing over **30 million poppies and 125,000 wreaths**, enabling people across the nation to take part in remembrance.

The 2024 London Poppy day raised an extraordinary **£1,285,000**. – a 28% increase on last year – thanks to our incredible volunteers and members! These contributions allow us to provide crucial support to the Armed Forces community and their families whenever they need it.

We could not do it without you, and we would love to see you again for Poppy Appeal 2025.

## Branch Community Support update – January 2025

### BCS Video

We're excited to launch our new video promoting Branch Community Support (BCS); designed to inspire new Supporters to get involved and to increase awareness of what BCS entails. You can find the video on the BCS webpage, [YouTube](#) and [on MAP](#).

Please do share the video with your members and anyone who is interested in getting involved in BCS. A huge thank you to Debbie and Paul in Newton Abbot for supporting with this video.

### Lost Contact Process for BCS beneficiaries

For both telephone buddying and home visits, we have aligned our processes with that of RBL's

welfare team to support a 'Lost Contact Process'. This is when a BCS Supporter has been unsuccessful in gaining contact with a beneficiary despite attempts to call or visit. The process can be found on the BCS webpage as well as [MAP](#).

### Branch Dashboards

From the 14<sup>th</sup> of January, branches and counties will be able to access new dashboards which display their BCS statistics, community event statistics, and lists of Active and Inactive BCS Supporters. The data in these dashboards are generated by monthly BCS returns from BCS Supporters and Branch Community Coordinators.

To access the dashboards, visit the [Branch Community Hub](#) on the MAP homepage. Please note these dashboards are only available to Branch Chairmen, Secretaries, BCCs, and CCSCs. The dashboards, trends and permissions will be reviewed in 3 months' time.

### Membership Council Brief

The Membership Council Chair's Summary of the December 2024 meeting is now [available on MAP](#). The next Membership Council meeting will take place on 6th February, with the Chair's summary to follow in due course.

### Our work on membership communications

We know that communications is a hot topic at many engagement events. In response, we have formed a Membership Communications and Engagement Advisory Group made up both RBL members and staff.

#### The makeup of the advisory group is:

- Jan Cosgrove: Membership Council Rep: National Branches District
- Amy Gough: Interim Director, Membership
- Annette Gould: Chair, Alrewas Branch
- Bob Fletcher: Treasurer, Dorset County
- Chris Jones: Membership Engagement Manager, Central Region
- Janet Warby: Secretary, Paris Branch
- Laura Hayworth: Vice Chair, Women's Section
- Liz Spivey: County Chair, Yorkshire NE
- Neil Shorrocks: Chair, Blackburn Branch
- Paul McKay: Vice Chair, Rushden Branch
- Louise Wates: Membership Communications Manager
- Sam Byrne: Membership Communications Officer
- Betty Robinson: Membership Engagement Administrator, North Region

The Group's purpose is: *to support, advise and function as a sounding board for improving communication and engagement between members and the RBL.* It has met online three times so



far and has reviewed relevant intel/insights gathered over the summer - **thank you** to members who provided views through various surveys.

The group has given its support on articulating [the problem we need to fix](#); supporting with creating a vision we can aim for; and providing personal examples of where improvements can be made. We will continue to share the Group's work and how it is making a difference.

We'd love to hear from you, if you have relevant feedback relating to Member Communication and Engagement, please contact [membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk).

### **“What membership means to me”**

*We find out what motivates some of our members to demonstrate the purpose and values of membership. This month, we speak to Laura Hosking, Hereford and Worcestershire Membership Engagement Officer, pictured below with Johnny Mercer.*

From beneficiary, to member, to colleague, Laura Hosking says her RBL journey has been a good one. As the MEO for Hereford and Worcestershire, she's worked for RBL since July 2023 and loves interacting with branches and members.



But around 20 years ago, she was in a very different place. Faced with eviction, she had turned to the RBL for help.

“I was at my wits end,” she says. “My son was about four years old, and I was about to be thrown out of my house because of a mistake with my benefits. I called the Legion and they got everything sorted.” Within a few months her finances were back on track and, she says, she hasn't looked back.

Because of RBL's help, Laura decided that as soon as her finances improved, she would join as a member. “And I always promised myself that if I saw a job in the Legion, I would take it.”

RBL membership, she says, means having support and contact with other members and staff. “This means never feeling lonely and knowing there is always someone to talk to.”

An RAF veteran, Laura joined up in 1988 and served for almost 10 years. “I served in various operational theatres throughout Northwest Europe and the UK. I spent time at RAFs Swinderby, Cranwell, Ascension Island, Leeming and Bruggen in Germany.

“Ascension Island was by far my most enjoyable posting as I love animals and nature and there was lots to do.”

Having been a beneficiary and being a member, she says, helps with her work. “It helps as knowing what the membership needs has helped me when dealing with member inquiries.”

Requests for help can be interesting and varied, such as a request from a teacher who wants to connect with a veteran for Remembrance or for a standard bearer to attend the funeral of a veteran.

"It can be so important to have a standard bearer at a funeral,' she says. "I've told my son that when I go, I want to have a flag draped on my coffin and a standard bearer there."

The best bit about being an MEO, she says, is going out to the branches and meeting the people and supporting them to be more active. "I've managed to get a branch back in that's been out in the cold. I suggested they do 'meet ups' rather than 'meetings'. It was only about five of them who came along to the first one, but there were two who wouldn't normally come."

Laura encourages colleagues who don't know about membership to find out about their local branches.

They are all different, she says. Some may be "all singing all dancing and others can be tiny". But what's important, she adds, is that "the beliefs of the RBL come through the membership

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Thank you for reading! The February edition of Central News is due to be published  
Tuesday 4th February.