



Central News – October 2024

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

Key Information

Title	Page	Summary
Membership Directorate	2	We thank Janet Talman, Executive Director: Membership, for her dedication and hard work as she leaves RBL
Event cancellations	2	Meetups and roadshows to be paused for review
RBL 2024/5 Elections	3	How you and your branch can get involved
RBL email rollout	3	rbl.community – widening access and engagement
Membership Handbook	3	Update and summary of changes out this week
Help shape RBL's strategy	4	Take part in our short survey and help shape our future
Internet banking	4	Updates on our Lloyds internet banking provision
Public Liability Insurance	5	Resources to help you plan for safe and successful events
Contacting County Chairs	5	The best way to reach your County Chair
White poppies	5	RBL's position and how red poppies support beneficiaries
Poppy Appeal Infringement	6	Protecting the RBL poppy and RBL fundraising

News and Updates

Title	Page	Summary
Membership Council Meeting Summaries	6	Now available on MAP
Remembrance volunteering	6	Opportunities to get involved in our activities
Remembrance Live Assembly	7	How we're engaging schools and how you can help

Festival of Remembrance	7	Information update for ticket holders
Remembering Afghanistan	7	Remembering service and sacrifice
Youth Membership	8	An update on RBL Youth Membership
Gifts in Wills update	8	Free resources and online webinars
Credit their Service	8	Our campaign, one year on
MP Caseworker Guide	9	We've relaunched our guide for MPs and their staff
Branch Life		
Title	Page	Summary
Commemorating Antwerp	9	Remembering the liberation of Antwerp, 80 years on

Important dates	
1 October 2024	2024/25 election cycle begins
9 November 2024	Festival of Remembrance
10 November 2024	Remembrance Sunday
11 November 2024	Armistice Day

Membership Directorate – leadership update

In September, we bade farewell to Janet Talman, Executive Director: Membership, and thanked her for all her hard work. After several years with RBL, Janet took the decision leave RBL. She intends to remain a RBL member and volunteer, so we may bump into her during Poppy Appeal or even the pedal to Paris bike ride, which is on her bucket list.

We extend a warm welcome to Nina Villa, Director: Customer Operations, who takes over as interim Executive Director of Membership from the 1st of October.

Meetups and Roadshows paused for review

Following feedback from County Chairs about the importance of clear communication and effective engagement, and following a change in Executive Director in the Membership Directorate, the Membership Meet ups and Roadshows planned for later this year have been cancelled for review. While we look into the best approach going forward, we are sorry for any disappointment this may have caused. If you have any queries, please contact membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk

RBL 2024/5 Elections – find out how you can take part

RBL's elections are now open for nominations to the positions of National Chair, National Vice Chair and Elected Trustee as well as 12 Membership Council Representative areas which are also open for nominations.

Nominations close at 5:00pm on 17 January 2025, followed by the voting stage of the elections process. Successful candidates will be taking up their positions at the close of Annual Conference, May 2025. These roles are vital in helping to shape the leadership of the Royal British Legion and all eligible branches are encouraged to take part.

Information packs have been shared by email or post with designated Branch Election Points of Contact. Further information is also available [on the elections website](#). For any queries, please contact elections@britishlegion.org.uk.

Widening information access and engagement with rbl.community

We are pleased to announce that the rbl.community email / Membership Administration Portal (MAP) rollout is underway. An rbl.community email enables county and branch officers to:

- View updated member lists,
- 24/7 access to important and useful documents such as policies and procedure guidance,
- receive direct communications such as Central News via your rbl.community email,
- share best practice and chat with members across the world on Viva Engage, and more.

County and branch committee members who do not yet have an rbl.community email address are being invited to register their interest. If you or someone you know who would be eligible, please register an interest with your Membership Engagement Officer.

Uptake helps to support us in our aim to achieve gold standard compliance in GDPR, data protection and IT security which, in turn, helps to protect all members and the RBL as a charity.

September Membership Handbook


The September Membership Handbook (MH) and accompanying summary of changes will be available this week from the Membership Administration Portal [Membership Handbook \(MAP\)](#), or from your Membership Engagement Officer. Both the current and new versions of the MS1 form will be accepted to confirm branch compliance this year.

Please provide any feedback on the MH using the [Membership Handbook Feedback Form](#).


Can you help shape RBL's strategy?

This year, six short-term strategic priorities were shared at Annual Conference. One of these priorities is dedicated to developing a new long-term strategy for RBL. As we work on this, we are inviting all members to have their input by completing our [short survey](#). (Closes 2nd December 2024.)


Six Strategic Priorities




Develop a new strategy and target operating model




Drive financial performance across RBL




Build the foundations to grow our future income



Strengthen and evolve our culture and governance




Improve our data, digital and technology capability



Improve our Membership experience

A charity underpinned by a clear, well understood strategy and plan to deliver impact for the armed forces community; that is financially strong and well governed; that is an inclusive and enjoyable place to work and volunteer; that is supported by modern and effective systems; and where membership thrives.



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

We would be grateful if you could please you share the survey link with your branch members so that we can hear from as many members as possible. Thank you!

Internet banking update

We are pleased to announce the start of a phased internet banking rollout with Lloyds bank. The initial phase will be to compliant counties and districts this year, with Membership Engagement Managers sending formal email invitations this month.

In early 2025 a phased regional rollout will begin to compliant branches. Please note that this is a phased roll out by region, with Membership Engagement Officers sending formal invitations to branches when their region becomes eligible. Internet banking is not mandatory and will be limited to Lloyds bank initially, although other banks may be considered in future.

If you'd like to express your formations' interest in internet banking, [please complete this short survey](#), which only indicates interest. This enables us to gauge uptake and staff resourcing requirements for the rollout. A separate formal internet banking registration process will be required to proceed in future.

If your branch is already using internet banking, either with Lloyds or another bank, please confirm this to your MEO by email as soon as possible. We are aware there are a small number of branches that are already using the facility due to being part of one of the pilot programmes or cases of special permission. We intend to review the set-up of these online banking accounts to ensure they are in line with the guidance we have now generated for operation.

Events, Guides and Public Liability Insurance Certificate

With Remembrancetide around the corner, many branches will be planning activities. To help you plan for safe and successful events, the following documents and resources are available on MAP:

- [Public Liability Certificate for 2024-25.](#)
- [Event Health and Safety Guide.](#)
- [Events and Activity Guide.](#)

If you have any queries about the content of these documents or need further guidance, please do not hesitate to contact us via membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk.

Contacting County Chairs

For anyone wishing to email their County Chair, please use the following easy format to contact them directly – simply replace ‘countyname’ with the name of the county as follows:
countyname.chairman@rbl.community.

Please protect any personal or confidential information by contacting your County Chair individually and be aware that using the group email “countychairman@britishlegion.org.uk” will email every County Chair in the UK and overseas. Please also be reminded that when sending emails to more than one individual or to a wide group, the BCC function is required to protect personal information if personal email addresses are being used.

RBL’s position on white poppies and how red poppies support beneficiaries

RBL’s red poppy is a universal symbol of Remembrance and hope. RBL red poppy wreaths are available through the [Poppy Shop](#) for those wishing to take part in an Act of Remembrance. Importantly, funds raised by the red poppy support our Armed Forces, veterans and their families in their time of need.

We understand that some people may wish to lay a white poppy wreath or wear a white poppy at Remembrance. Whilst RBL have no objection, we would ask that they consider using the red poppy alongside it as an act of respect for the service and sacrifice of Britain’s Armed Forces, veterans, and

their families, and we encourage those organising Remembrance services to discuss with all groups how best to meet their needs.

Poppy Appeal Infringement

Every year, criminals and counterfeiters make money by exploiting the two- and four-petal poppies, selling items under the guise that they are supporting the Poppy Appeal and Scottish Poppy Appeal. Members of the public who buy these fake products unknowingly part with their money, believing they are helping our family of charities.

The RBL Legal team will again be seeking out infringing products and acting to have them removed from sale. Branches and Counties are kindly reminded that only products that have been provided by the RBL Poppy Shop are to be sold; and none bearing the RBL brand, or brand-related images are to be produced without the authorisation of the RBL Brand team. If you come across any infringing products online or on social media, please do not hesitate to send the link to:

membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk.

Membership Council Meeting Summaries

The Membership Council (MC) Chair's Summaries of the June and August MC meetings are now available [here on MAP](#). The next Membership Council meeting will take place on 17th October, with the MC Chair's summary to follow in due course.

Remembrance volunteering – volunteer at London Poppy Day on 31st October

This one-day 7am-7pm street collection mobilises over 1,000 uniformed personnel from the Royal Navy, British Army, and Royal Air Force, along with an additional 1,000 veterans, volunteers, and supporters. The day brings communities together, creating one of the only opportunities in the year where uniformed personnel can engage directly with the public. Register to be part of this exciting and unique day by [visiting the website](#). London Poppy Day volunteers will be provided with a food voucher if volunteering for the day as well as travel passes that grant free travel the day before, the day of and the day after London Poppy Day across the National Rail network, and on the day across the TfL network.

Help us out for the Poppy Appeal Across 24th October – 10th November

We are aiming to build on our incredible 2023 campaign and raise even more to support our beneficiaries. We still have several districts for which we need Poppy Appeal Organisers, and we also need more collectors nationwide. We would love for your help, and we'd encourage you to get involved, and bring family & friends – volunteers don't have to be connected to the RBL to take part! Register online [on the website](#), or email: poppyappealvolunteering@britishlegion.org.uk.

Remembrance live assembly

Do you have a connection with a local school? Would you like to share a special Remembrance moment with the students and teachers? On Monday 11th November 2024 at 10.20am, RBL and the National Literacy Trust will host the Remembrance Live Assembly.

This live online event is for students aged 9 to 14 (Years 5 to 9) and brings together music, poetry, veteran interviews and more to create an engaging experience that helps young people understand who, how and why we remember. The assembly ends with the Act of Remembrance.

If you're connected with a local school, please do consider encouraging them to sign-up to watch the Remembrance Live Assembly. You could even watch with them and give a personalised talk before or after the event. Schools, teachers and individuals can sign up for the event at:

rbl.org.uk/liveassembly.

Festival of Remembrance – ticket update

If you have purchased tickets for this year's Festival of Remembrance, further details will be shared in due course. Due to security around the event, tickets will not be posted until approximately 10 days before the event.

Remembering Afghanistan

This year, RBL will remember the 10th anniversary of the end combat operations by British Armed Forces in Afghanistan (Operation Herrick). The UK had a military presence in Afghanistan from October 2001, when troops were deployed as part of the NATO response to the 9/11 attacks, and then as part of the International Security Assistance Force which initially provided security and reconstruction teams. In 2006, British forces were sent to Southern Afghanistan to tackle a growing insurgency in the region and experienced their heaviest fighting in Helmand.

By 2010, numbers of UK personnel reached their peak with 10,000 deployed across Afghanistan. Later the same year, discussions began over the withdrawal of NATO forces and, in 2014, Britain formally ended all combat operations in the country.

Some 150,000 British Armed Forces personnel served in Afghanistan, and 457 lost their lives. The RBL will honour the service and sacrifice of those who served in Afghanistan and Operation Herrick with a short ceremony at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, on Saturday 26th October 2024. To register to attend, please [visit the RBL website and complete the registration form](#). Registration closes on Monday 7th October or when capacity is reached. If you have any questions, please contact RemembranceEvents@britishlegion.org.uk.

Youth Membership update

The Membership Directorate and Membership Council are currently reviewing Youth Membership to ensure that we are keeping members and branches safe and protected in line with safeguarding practices. Therefore, we will not be promoting the recruitment of new Youth Members whilst we gain approval for the best direction to take this forward – however, we are still sharing stories about young people’s engagement with the RBL and will continue to do so.

We hope to provide an update on the outcome of this review in the first half of 2025. Thank you for your patience whilst this work continues.

Gifts in Wills update

We’re pleased to announce that Gifts in Wills resources are now available for all members to order. These materials are a wonderful way to promote this special form of giving in your clubs and branches. To place an order, please reach out to your MEO.

A huge thank you to volunteers and members in the North West and Northern Ireland who helped generate an incredible £380,000 in pipeline income last year. This contribution is making a significant difference in supporting RBL’s vital welfare work.

As we look ahead, we aim to raise even more funds during this year’s Poppy Appeal. To help us achieve this goal, we invite you to join one of our upcoming online Gifts in Wills webinars to learn more about how this kind of giving supports the Royal British Legion.

- [Monday 30th September – 2pm](#)
- [Monday 30th September – 7pm](#)
- [Thursday 10th October – 6pm](#)

Simply sign up using the links above, and the event will be added to your calendar. You’ll also receive an email with all the details needed to join the webinar. As a thank you, you’ll receive a £10 Poppy Shop voucher (one voucher per person).

For more information about Gifts in Wills, please contact Supporter Care at 0345 845 1945 or via supportercare@britishlegion.org.uk.

Credit their Service campaign – one year on

The Royal British Legion and Poppyscotland’s [Credit Their Service](#) campaign aims to end military compensation being unfairly counted as income when assessing eligibility for welfare means-tested benefits. This injustice impacts some of the poorest veterans and their families outside of

councils in England that already exempt military compensation.

Over the past year, thanks to the support from members like you, 30 more councils in England now disregard military compensation entirely in their means tests for local benefits. While progress has been made, there's still work to be done to ensure fair treatment nationwide. That is why this campaign forms part of our top priorities for the Government.

Please do kindly encourage your members to [learn more about our campaign, its progress and how to get involved](#), and by signing up to our [Campaigner Community](#).

Relaunched Caseworker Guide for MPs now available

Will you help us ensure MPs are well-equipped to better understand and support constituents from the Armed Forces community? Our Caseworker Guide is a practical tool that provides essential information, helpful contacts and advice on assisting veterans, serving personnel, reservists and their families. It also highlights unique challenges faced by the Armed Forces community, dispels myths, and shares updated data on what it means to be a member of the Armed Forces community.

Please [encourage](#) your branch members to reach out to their MP to ask them to download the RBL MP Caseworker guide, which will allow them to better serve their constituents.

Commemorating Antwerp, “a very proud and brave city”



Photo copyright: Frederik Beyens

In September, invited by the Antwerp Branch, David Tannock, MEO for Overseas, had the privilege of attending the commemoration of the liberation of Antwerp – also attended by RBL's Director General Mark Atkinson, Chief of Staff Clare Waterworth and MC Representative for South West Midlands Adrian Wright. **David Tannock writes**

Eighty ago, Antwerp was liberated by British and Canadian forces. The Second British Army (11th Armored Division) seized the Old Town and Port of Antwerp with its equipment virtually intact on 4th September 1944. The city had been targeted for its large shipyard and docks and its pre-war population of 35,000 Orthodox Jews.



Photo copyright: Frederik Beyens



Photo copyright: Frederik Beyens

In 1942, when the Nazis demanded the police round up 1,000 Jews for deportation, within 48 hours the police had located and hidden 700. In revenge the Nazis executed 32 police officers and deported 43. Antwerp was also one of the first cities to be targeted by the V1 and V2 rockets.

Events, attended by the current and former Mayors of Antwerp, Ambassadors for Australia, Canada and Germany and, informally, the British Ambassador who was not formally in post at the time, included:

- WW1 memorial at Stadspark, held at the Monument for the fallen of the 5th, 15th, and 25th Line Regiment (Monument voor de gesneuvelden van het 5de, 15de en 25ste Linieregimen).
- Chemins de mémoire (memorial of victims) to the V1 and V2 rockets. At the same time, Adrian Wright and the Branch Chair attended the memorial to the police who were executed and deported during the war. In the afternoon a reception where the Defence Attache and Ambassadors attended to watch the Liberation Parade. In the evening, RBL members attended a tour and talk on HMS Cattistock, which had been invited to the city for the event.
- The Tank Ceremony organised and managed by the Antwerp Branch RBL followed by the commemoration for the new Memorial to all victims 1938-1945.

A very proud and brave city that deserved commemorating!

Thank you for reading! The November edition of Central News is due to be published
Tuesday 5th November.