



Central News – June 2024

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| Important dates | |
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| 6th June 2024 | D-Day 80th Anniversary |
| 10th June 2024 | 2024/25 branch fee notification deadline |
| 29th June 2024 | Armed Forces Day |
| 30th June 2024 | Branch Financial Year end |
| 30th September 2024 | Deadline to submit Branch Accounts |

A thank you on Volunteers' Week

This week, as we celebrate the contributions volunteers make to communities across the UK, The Membership Directorate would like to say a very heartfelt **thank you** for volunteering your time, skills, and passion with RBL.

We are grateful to all those who volunteer - from our County and Branch Officers who work tirelessly to keep RBL's presence strong in their local area – ensuring our Armed Forces Community has friends and allies in every community, to our Poppy Appeal volunteers who raise millions of pounds each year and keep the message of Remembrance strong.

There are so many RBL [volunteers](#) across the UK and overseas, and each and every one plays an important part in what we do - and for that, we give a huge **thank you**.

Annual Conference 2024 wrap-up

This year we saw over 500 Delegates and visitors attend Annual Conference in person in Newport, with almost 250 joining us online. A very busy weekend was also a weekend of firsts for RBL, including in the opening of Conference on Saturday – look out for July's *Legion* magazine to find out more!

Conference gave us an opportunity to celebrate the excellence of our members, clubs and formations in the Annual Membership Awards presentation ceremony. The awards recognise those who work so passionately in the name of RBL and its values, and we extend our sincere congratulations to all the winners and runners-up. We will share more about their achievements on the [Annual Conference webpage](#) soon.

However, we cannot remember the weekend without reflecting on the passing of National President Vice Admiral Sir Clive Johnstone KBE CB shortly after the close of Conference. Sir Clive was incredibly passionate about RBL and believed deeply in our vital work. At the opening of Conference, he spoke with unflinching passion about this organisation and the work that we do, emphasising the importance of coming together and working in union.

Thank you to all who attended and helped make the event a successful, productive Conference. We also want to thank Conference attendees who took part in our post-event feedback survey. This has provided us with valuable insights to help deliver Conference going forward.

We look forward to seeing you 16th – 18th May 2025 in Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

2024/25 branch fees reminder

As we approach the new financial year commencing 1st October 2024, we have been reaching out to Branch Chairs and Secretaries by post and email with the annual invitation to review and update their branch fees; membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk must receive requests to introduce new fees or adjust existing ones by **10th June 2024**. If we do not hear from you by then we will proceed with existing rates.

Instructions on how to submit updated fees or introduce new fees by post or email are [available on MAP](#). Should you prefer to maintain your current branch fee structure into the next financial year, no action is required on your part. If you have any questions or require assistance, please contact membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk.

D-Day 80 Commemorations

We will be marking the 80th anniversary of D-Day, on 6th June 2024, with events in the UK and Normandy, as well as with community events around the UK.

1. National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) Service – 6th June

Alongside a public service, RBL will welcome D-Day and Normandy veterans and their families in a VIP area. The NMA will remain open to the public on 6th June and visitors are welcome to watch the service in the grounds, commencing at 2pm. [Visit the webpage](#) for further information.

2. Service of Commemoration marking the 80th Anniversary of the Normandy Landings – 5th June

RBL will be holding an event at the Bayeux War Cemetery, France for Normandy and other WW2 veterans, families of the fallen, and descendants of Normandy veterans.

3. British National Event to mark the 80th Anniversary of the Normandy Landings – 6th June

With the Ministry of Defence, RBL will hold the British National Event at the Ver-Sur-Mer British Normandy Memorial in France to mark the 80th Anniversary of the Normandy Landings. This event will be broadcast on the BBC at 9:30am UK time on Thursday 6th June.

Find out more [on our website](#) about D-Day 80 and the commemorative events being held. Should you have any questions, please contact remembranceevents@britishlegion.org.uk.

Developing future Remembrance initiatives

Each year, individuals from across the UK and overseas unite to honour the service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces community. We're eager to learn how supporters and members have connected with their local communities to inspire participation in Remembrance activities and have produced a [brief survey](#). We would appreciate a few minutes of your time - your feedback will help to inform the development of future Remembrance initiatives. [You can take the survey here](#). Thank you.

Remembering Kosovo: 25 Years On

This year RBL will remember the 25th anniversary of the end of the Kosovo War, which saw the deployment of the NATO-led international peacekeeping force – KFOR. 2024 also marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of NATO. RBL will honour the service and sacrifices of those who served with KFOR with a Service of Remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, on Sunday 23rd June 2024.

We look forward to welcoming all Armed Forces personnel who served with NATO's KFOR mission and/or their families to join us for the service. To attend, please [register online](#) by Monday 10th June. Should you have any questions please contact remembranceevents@britishlegion.org.uk.

Teaching Remembrance

RBL's Teaching Remembrance Learning Programme offers a wide range of free resources and events for school children and their teachers, youth groups and families, including:

- Free downloadable learning resources, available online all year round.
- Free in-person and online events, including educational workshops and assemblies.
- Learning activities linked to the National Curriculum and Curriculum for Wales.

In May, the Teaching Remembrance Learning Programme launched a brand-new, free resource to help young people understand and mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day. Based on a new book, it includes a range of reading, writing and creative activities linked to the Second World War and D-Day and those who served in them. Through these educational activities young people can help to honour and remember those who experienced these events, keeping their memory alive.

Explore the Teaching Remembrance events and download learning resources for free on RBL's [Teaching Remembrance webpage](#).

Membership Council Brief

The Membership Council (MC) Chairs Brief for the April meeting is now available [on MAP](#). This was the last meeting for several MC representatives, and the last meeting with Lynda Atkins as Chair. Read the summary of key decisions and discussions [on MAP](#).

Closing soon: Diversity and Inclusion Survey

In January 2022 we surveyed Branch Chairs to find out how confident they were engaging with more diverse communities in their area and what support they needed to do this. We received a huge range of responses and are repeating the survey to assess the impact of our action plan and develop a new strategy.

The survey will close 5pm 7th June - please do have your say and enable us to find out about the impact our work has had and what more we can do to do to support you in the future. [You can take the survey here](#).

Simpler membership enquiries

We are simplifying the way you can get in touch with membership enquiries, providing a clearer process and more consistent, timely responses. From 1st July 2024 all general membership enquiries that are not for your MEO should be sent to membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk.

You can still contact your Membership Engagement Officer (MEO) as usual for matters including:

- Day to day running / management of branches and counties
- Local membership matters
- Compliance queries, including branch accounts and MS1s

All other membership enquiries should be sent to membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk only. Please do encourage your members to send their membership enquiries to this address.

Improving membership communications

We are working on a plan to improve our communications with *all* members at *all* levels. In order to make meaningful, positive improvements, it is important we have a clear understanding of what is going well, what is going less well and what gaps are in need of addressing.

To help us understand this, please use this [short survey](#) to share your thoughts on our current communications and engagement. We would encourage you to share this link with other members. Your feedback is vital and will help develop our new communications strategy and improve the membership experience. [The survey](#) closes at 5pm on Monday 8th July.

RBL email accounts update

During the March County Chair's Seminar, we received several questions about the roll out of O365 email addresses to Branch and County Officers. Following this, we are working with RBL's Information Management and Technology (IM&T) team to deliver updates on this project in Central News.

Please find the first update [here on MAP](#), providing information on the project background, key milestones and timeline. Should you have any questions please contact Membership Services: membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk.

Festival of Remembrance 2024

Our Festival of Remembrance will be held in the Royal Albert Hall, London on Saturday 9th November 2024 with performances at 2pm and 7pm.

- **Evening tickets** will go on sale to members on Tuesday 23rd July.
- **Afternoon tickets** will go on sale to members on Tuesday 30th July.

Further information about the festival and how to purchase them will be available soon [on the RBL website](#). Should you have any questions at this stage, please contact festival@britishlegion.org.uk.

A General Election has been announced - here's how you can get involved

On 22nd May, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a General Election will take place on Thursday, 4th July 2024. RBL and Poppyscotland have already launched [our Manifesto](#), highlighting our priorities for the next UK government to better support our Armed Forces community.

We will need your help to ensure your Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) know about our General Election manifesto and pledge to prioritise better support for our Armed Forces community if elected. Sign up to our [Campaigner Community](#) to receive details on how you can get in contact with your Parliamentary candidates in the coming weeks.

We need the help of members like you to make sure the next Government prioritises giving our Armed Forces community the support they deserve for their service and sacrifice.

A campaign win: England to get a Veterans' Commissioner thanks to your support

In November 2023, we launched a petition calling on the UK government to appoint a Veterans' Commissioner for England. Veterans' Commissioners in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are already dedicated to advocating for the veteran community. We felt it was important to ensure that the support available to all veterans across the UK is consistent.

Over 1,400 of our supporters, including many members, staff and volunteers, signed our petition which we delivered to the Office of Veterans' Affairs in December. Thanks to this work, we are delighted that the Government will appoint a [National Veterans' Commissioner](#) to cover England.

We will work with the new Commissioner to ensure that our Armed Forces community across the whole of the UK receives the support they deserve. Read our official statement [here](#).

To hear more about our campaigns, sign up to our [Campaigner Community](#).

Did you know you can access Armed Forces community data to support your local Member Recruitment and Event activities?

On Thursday 16th May we hosted an [online event](#) to discuss Census data available on our Armed Forces community in England & Wales thanks to our successful [Count Them In](#) campaign that many of our members helped us win.

Learn about:

- Identifying the basic size, location, and demographics of the veteran population across England & Wales
- Planning for veteran-specific member recruitment, event planning, care pathways
- How Census data informs our campaigning work
- How this data helps local authorities identify and meet veterans' needs

[Click here](#) to watch a recording of the Webinar. Or dive straight into accessing:

1. [Interactive Census Map](#): Locations, percentages, heat map & downloadable excel sheet.
2. [Nomis](#): Locations of previously served & communal establishments, heat maps & downloadable excel sheet & totals/ percentages.
3. [ONS Flexible Table Builder/ Built Tables](#): Locations, demographics, living arrangements & health/ unpaid care & downloadable excel sheet/ totals.

Please [share the link](#) of the recording with your members or anyone you know that may be interested in learning about what census data we have available, where to find census data and how we use it. [The recording](#) also includes a Q&A session towards the end. We hope to do more of these in the future.

Please get in touch via publicaffairs@britishlegion.org.uk if you have any questions. Sign up to our [Campaigner Community](#) to get involved with our campaigning work.

Bringing remembrance to life

National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire

A group of students visiting the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) in Staffordshire recently got a taste of what life was like on the home front during World War II.

Visiting a new immersive exhibit, *The Year Was 1944*, students explored a gallery that had been transformed into a wartime home and could sit in a replica Anderson Shelter. In a chance encounter with another visitor, some also heard what it felt like, as a child, to sit in an Anderson Shelter during an air raid.

The visitor, who was seven years old when the war finished, recalled the days of the bombings. “It just felt like the norm to hear the air raid sirens and go into the shelters. In fact, me and my friends would play a game counting how many roof tiles the house and school had lost once it was over.”

This brief conversation inside the replica shelter really brought the exhibit to life for the students who couldn't wait to share it with the rest of their group.

The NMA hopes to see many more schools and visitors using the space to learn over the coming months. The exhibition is open to the public until 3rd November at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. Find out more about the exhibition [on the NMA website](#).
