Royal British Legion Oxfordshire December 2026

December 2026

(This Newsletter is produced quarterly Apr, Aug, Dec annually)

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Message from the County Chair - Fiona Lovesey

It has been another busy and rewarding period for Oxfordshire, and I have been delighted to represent the County at a number of events that remind us just how important the Legion family and our connections with the wider Armed Forces community continue to be.

I had the pleasure of attending RAF Benson Families Day, which was a wonderful opportunity to meet serving personnel, families and members of the wider military community. Days like this are always enjoyable, but more importantly they help us strengthen those important relationships and demonstrate that the Royal British Legion continues to stand alongside our Armed Forces family.

I was also deeply honoured to attend the VJ Day Commemoration at Sir Winston Churchill's grave in Bladon. It was a moving and poignant occasion, providing time to pause, reflect and remember all those who served and sacrificed in the Far East during the Second World War. It is a privilege for Oxfordshire to play its part in ensuring their service and sacrifice are never forgotten.

More recently, I attended the County Chairs Seminar, joining colleagues from across the Royal British Legion. It was an excellent opportunity to hear the latest updates from National Headquarters, exchange ideas and experiences, and share some of the fantastic work taking place within our counties and branches. You will find a separate summary in this newsletter so that everyone across Oxfordshire can benefit from the discussions.

Here in Oxfordshire, work continues on our County Plan, with supporting our branches, encouraging membership and engagement, recognising our wonderful volunteers and maintaining good governance all remaining important priorities.

Most importantly, I want to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who continues to give their time and energy to the Legion across Oxfordshire. Whether you are a County Officer,

Branch Officer, Standard Bearer, fundraiser, Poppy Appeal Officer. volunteer or member, your contribution matters. It is your enthusiasm, friendship and commitment that keep our branches active and the Legion visible within our communities.

There is always more to do, but there is also so much for us to be proud of. By working together, supporting one another and sharing our successes, I am confident that we can continue to build an even stronger and more welcoming Legion community across Oxfordshire.

Fiona

Oxfordshire County Committee

County Committee Members

County President

Mrs Ann Mid-Winter **Oxfordshire.President@RBL.Community**

County Chair

Chair -Mrs Fiona Lovesey **Oxfordshire.Chair@RBL.Community**

County Vice Chair

Vice Chair - Mr Tjark Andrews **Oxfordshire.ViceChair@RBL.Community**

County Secretary

Mr Rob Lovesey **Oxfordshire.Secretary@RBL.Community**

County Treasurer

Mr Andrew Bowes **Oxfordshire.Treasurer@RBL.Community**

County Parade Marshal

Mr Peter Clarke **Oxfordshire.ParadeMarshal@RBL.Community**

County Training Officer

Mr Derek Bradshaw Oxfordshire.CTO@RBL.Community

County Recruitment Officer

Mr Brian Leach **Oxfordshire.CRO@RBL.Community**

County Community Support Co-ordinator

Vacant

Oxfordshire Club Liaison Officer

Vacant

County Standard Bearer

Mr Tjark Andrews **Oxfordshire.StdBearer@RBL.Community**

County Branch Liaison Officers

- **County Chair – Fiona Lovesey (Oxfordshire.Chair@RBL.Community):** Benson and District, Watlington, Thame and Stanton Harcourt
- **County Treasurer – Andrew Bowes (Oxfordshire.Treasurer@RBL.Community):** Bix, Shiplake, Nettlebed, Ramsden, Headington and Standlake & Northmoor
- **County Recruitment Officer - Brian Leach (Oxfordshire.CRO@RBL.Community):** Bicester, Kidlington, Kirtlington, Heyford and Deddington
- **County Training Officer - Derek Bradshaw (Oxfordshire.CTO@RBL.Community):** Littlemore, Yarnton, Eynsham, Cassington and Islip
- **County Parade Marshal – Pete Clarke (Oxfordshire.ParadeMarshal@RBL.Community):** Chipping Norton, Bloxham, Kingham and Banbury
- **County Standard Bearer – Tjark Andrews (Oxfordshire.StdBearer@RBL.Community):** Burford, Bampton, Charlbury, North Leigh and Carterton
- **County Secretary – Rob Lovesey (Oxfordshire.Secretary@RBL.Community):** Dorchester, Henley, Peppard, Wheatley and Chinnor

Legion Staff

Membership Engagement Manager (MEM)

Mr Chris Jones **Central.MEM@RBL.Community**

Membership Engagement Officer (MEO)

Ms Lebo Nyoni **Oxfordshireshire.MEO@RBL.Community**

Poppy Appeal Manager (Oxfordshire)

Mr Yanto Evans YEvans@britishlegion.org.uk

Poppy Appeal Relationship Assistant

Ms Emma Gasson Egasson@britishlegion.org.uk

Royal British Legion Membership Services

membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk

0800 307 7773 (free)

By post: Please write to The Royal British Legion, 199 Borough High Street, London SE1 1AA

Lines are open 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week.

Armed Forces and Veterans Support

0808 802 8080

info@britishlegion.org.uk

Supporter Services (Donations and Fundraising)

Supporter Careline on 0345 845 1945

supportercare@britishlegion.org.uk

By Post: Supporter Services, The Royal British Legion, 199 Borough High Street, London SE1 1AA

Annual County Conference - 30 Jan 2027

The 102nd Oxfordshire County Conference will be held on Saturday 30 Jan 2027 at Carterton Community Centre, Carterton. Oxfordshire. OX18 1AX. Conference will start at 1000hrs and expected to finish at 1500hrs.

Voting Branches may send a Delegate to the Conference and must provide an email address on application. Voting Branches are described in the Royal Charter and on Delegate application forms. Branches should have received the Calling Notices which contains all the Annexes which need to be completed by Branches if attending. The Closing date for applications is **1700hrs 12 Dec 26** and should be submitted to the County Secretary.

The necessary conference forms are attached in the Calling Notice document. All nominations, motions and amendments to motions for Conference are to be passed at a Branch Meeting before being submitted on the attached forms to the County Secretary by **1700hrs 12 December 2026,** Motions Charter Motions and Motions of Urgency should contain the Motion and the following three paragraphs with an explanation for each:

1. Reason for inclusion.
2. Effect if passed.
3. Main argument.

Please complete the template contained in the Calling Notice for motions and send this with the completed Motion Certificate.

Guidance and advice on the presentation of motions will be available if requested, to a Delegate prior to Conference.

County Committee Vacancies

The County Committee has some vacancies which need to be filled from the membership these are:

- County Community Support Coordinator
- County Training Officer
- County RBL Club Liaison Officer
- County Committee Members

If these are areas which you feel you might like to contribute to the running of the County, please get in touch with the County Secretary to discuss further. Training and support will be provided for all posts where necessary

Highlights from the County Chairs Seminar

Leadership Key Points:

1. Stronger County and Branch Relationships:

• County committees should engage more regularly with branches.

• Each county committee member becomes the named contact for a group of branches which enables:

1. Builds relationships.
2. Creates accountability.
3. Gives branches a known contact.
4. Helps information flow both ways.
5. Encourage two-way communication rather than information flowing only one way.
6. Branches should be involved in county decision-making.
7. Provide the opportunity for sharing good practice between branches.
8. Hold informal introductory meetings between county and branch representatives.

2. Training and Development:

• Ensure all committee members and officers complete required training.

• Increase use of technology and digital tools.

• Encourage Microsoft 365 usage.

• Consider county-wide training targets and regular reviews.

3. Community Engagement:

• Building links with:

1. Schools
2. Cadet forces

3. Local councils
4. Youth organisations
5. Veteran groups
6. Community groups
7. Samaritans
8. Faith groups
9. Local businesses
10. Hold open days to bring organisations together.
11. Better mapping of local community contacts.
12. Use local knowledge held by branches

4. Youth Engagement:

• Youth representation and involvement.

• Contacting schools, cadets and youth organisations.

• Encouraging participation in remembrance activities.

• Creating links with youth-focused stakeholders.

Director General Mark Atkinson reaffirmed RBL's important role as a trusted, independent and evidence-led voice for the Armed Forces community. He highlighted recent engagement with the new Secretary of State for Defence on issues including:

• the Armed Forces Covenant,

• the Northern Ireland Troubles Bill

• nuclear test veterans

• VALOUR recognised centres

• the role charities may be asked to play in the event of future conflict

He emphasised the importance of preparing for whatever demands may lie ahead.

Sarah Pittaway, Director: Membership & Communities, shared her early thoughts, reflections and ideas as an expansion of the ongoing conversation and feedback from members.

Many membership benefits are intangible, to which the sense of connection and belonging is key. Sarah will be looking to understand how we can make membership more relevant, compelling and appealing, and how it can better stack up against the competition. We want potential members to fully understand and experience the reasons to join and the reasons to stay. The principle of Gain and Retain to Sustain has been devised to do exactly that.

When we gain new, engaged members, they make us stronger. We will be working alongside our current membership to retain them as well as our longer-serving, loyal members. It is that membership base that will ultimately sustain the future of the RBL and allow us to continue with our core activities of connect, remember and support.

Many exciting and innovative options are being explored to enhance the membership offer. The directorate will work closely with counties to roll out the options that work best locally, helping to ensure that RBL membership is compelling, relevant and attractive. Together, these activities are focused on securing the long-term future of RBL through its greatest asset: its members.

Olivia Brown, Head of Membership Acquisition, shared that the membership growth strategy aims for 5% year-on-year growth. The focus is on attracting active, passionate and engaged members who share a common goal and can work together. With gain, retain and sustain in mind, we want to connect with new demographics, both nationally and regionally. Several exciting new initiatives are underway:

• New recruitment packs for branches, including pull-up banners, new leaflets and contact centre cards with information for members to share.

• National and regional events and community activities.

• Bespoke membership activities around driving engagement and awareness.

• We are currently working with a membership consultancy to review the membership value proposition and explore how we can enhance the offer so it is more engaging and relevant, both now and for the future.

We're redesigning the membership journey to create a meaningful induction to the Legion. By working with Poppy Appeal, Fundraising and volunteers, we can provide one voice and one message, promote the Legion as widely as possible and help people feel welcomed from their first day of membership. We are working with three NHS trusts to trial washbags for veterans and family members in hospitals, with 50 bags for each county involved in the trial. This is separate from the washbags initiative for new Armed Forces recruits.

Lucy Inskip, Executive Director: Poppy Appeal & Remembrance, delivered updates on the Poppy Appeal. For the 2026 Poppy Appeal, the headline ambition is £59.5 million. Key priorities include:

• Recruiting 30 District-level Poppy Appeal Organisers and additional collectors.

• Products – e.g. 800,000 new-design pens, more car and lorry poppies and larger school packs.

• Supporting 10,000 Toucan (contactless payment app) users.

• Introducing revised donation values, bespoke QR codes and training videos.

• Improving volunteer equipment and communications through tabards, lanyards, digital forms, portal reordering and thank you pins.

• Testing new initiatives such as different donation values on contactless terminals and Toucan Cash (depositing service). All 60,000 collectors are expected to receive:

• A new lanyard containing clear identification and key contacts.

• Concise fundraising and safeguarding guidance.

• The volunteer thank-you pin, trialled in 2025, now planned for national rollout.

Action for branches: Thank you for helping to create a strong, coordinated launch by ensuring that no local Poppy Appeal events take place before National Launch Day (22 October).

Philippa Rawlinson, Director: Remembrance, delivered updates ahead of Remembrance tide.

• Local membership decisions (e.g. branch closures, mergers, etc.) may impact the Poppy Appeal. Please reach out to the Poppy Appeal Manager to flag anything that might affect the Poppy Appeal.

• ***To comply with HMRC guidelines, it's important we do not mix official Poppy Appeal merchandise with other unauthorised merchandise.***

• Our Remembrance Key Points document reflects who we are and what Remembrance means; that the Poppy is a universal symbol of Remembrance and hope for a peaceful future that is not aligned to any political or partisan group.

Remembrance forward planning – anniversaries of focus for 2027 and 2028.

2027:

• Falklands 45

• Operation Banner 20

• Festival of Remembrance 100

2028:

• National Service 65 / Nuclear Test Veterans 70

• Windrush 80

• Korea 75

• Armistice 110

The Festival of Remembrance ballot system, which was approved by the Membership Council, is now in its second year. As well as enabling a better occupancy rate for the festival, it is the fairest system because it gives more people the opportunity to attend.

Martin Pelling, Interim Head of Membership Engagement, updated on the development of an app to make branch reports and membership listings on MAP easier to understand. Following testing, an autumn launch is anticipated, when it will be available to Branch Chairs, Secretaries and Treasurers.

Once opened from MAP, the app will display:

• The reports viewer

• Branch membership report

• Branch overview

• Member payments report Displayed information will be from the previous week and will not be live data.

Key functions will include:

• Search and filter member records.

• Identify recent joiners.

• Select individuals for email communications.

• Check members' contact preferences.

• Individual records will show key membership and contact details

• The branch overview will provide headline totals and demographic break downs.

John Thornhill, Trustee and Chair of the National Conference Committee(NCC), updated on Annual Conference. Feedback results of the post-event survey after Annual Conference 2026 were as follows:

• 628 attendees in total

• 560 in person

• 68 virtual

• Only 334 branches sent delegates

• For the first time, 49 residents across five RBL care homes watched Conference proceedings remotely

Feedback from Conference attendees was largely positive, particularly regarding the agenda and speakers, opportunities to engage, the beneficiary speaker and ceremonial events.

Branches are warmly encouraged to consider joining Annual Conference 2027,either in person or online.

Alison Bunn, Membership Learning and Development Manager updated on the three main priorities for the Membership Training team.

The main priorities are as follows:

1) Better align training with membership priorities and the strategy, ensuring the right training is delivered.

2) Build and maintain the CTO team – although the role is optional, CTOs play a hugely important role – one-third of counties have no named CTO.

3) Plan the implementation of mandatory training, following the motion passed by delegates at Annual Conference. The first two priorities are essential to this.

Branches are encouraged to take the motions training course on Discover, helping us to receive the best possible motions.

All interested members are encouraged to apply for the Aspire 2027 training course when applications open; further information will be shared in the coming months.

Jon Summerson, Director: Armed Forces, Partnership and Youth Engagement, spoke on Armed Forces, youth and partnerships. The Armed Forces engagement strategy has four priorities:

• Extend engagement to regulars, reserves, military associations, veterans and families.

• Build relationships from Phase 1 training through transition and later life.

• Use partnerships, military sport and events to increase awareness and participation.

• Strengthen local relationships through branch and county activity reflecting localneed.

The intended youth approach will combine:

• Meaningful opportunities for young people in serving and veteran families

• Strategic relationships with educational and youth organisations

• A coordinated national youth-engagement strategy.

Future partnerships for youth engagement should demonstrate:

• Strategic fit with RBL's objectives. For example, while there is enthusiasm to go into schools, the purpose of such activities should be clear.

• Clear governance, supported by a consistent assessment process.

• Shared value for beneficiaries, partner and the RBL.

RBL Policies and Guidance Updates

Membership Handbook

The Executive Board has agreed to delay the release of the 2026 Membership Handbook; the pause will enable a number of wider updates to be incorporated. Work will commence in Jan 27 with the release later in year

MS1 Forms

The current version of the MS1 Form is now available on MAPs, it is marked "2026" however it has been announced that both 2025 and 2026 version will be accepted. A trial of a digital version is taking place and is hoped to be released in Sep 27.

Changes to Conference Standing Orders and motion process

The Board of Trustees has approved changes to the Standing Orders governing Annual Conference. These changes aim to improve transparency and provide greater consistency across the RBL governance processes.

Key changes include:

- Candidates nominated for Conference Committee will undertake an interview and successful nomination will require approval from the Board of Trustees before standing for election at Annual Conference. This now aligns with the same process required for Membership Council Representatives.
- Revised timelines for nominations, motions, amendments and appeals to allow proper consideration and oversight.
- A new Trustee Appeal Panel to hear second stage appeals.
- Updated arrangements for Motions of Urgency. Appeals will no longer be heard from the Conference floor and must follow the formal appeals process within published deadlines.

These changes follow legal review and align Conference processes with good governance practice. The revised Dtanding Orders and supporting guidance are available on the Annual Conference webpage and on MAPs. The Motions Training courseMotions Training course on Discover has also been updated, and officials are encouraged to complete it. The

deadlines for this year's Annual Conference were published on 1 October 2026 in the October Special Circular.

Public Liability Insurance Certificates

The 2026-2027 Public Liability Certificate has been shared with all Oxfordshire Branches although a copy can also be found in MAPs.

Protecting Member Data

Sending emails to multiple branch members' personal email addresses, remember to ***add recipient's names to the BCC Box*** (this should show to the right of the "To").

Poppy Cabs

You may be aware of some press and sector coverage (Daily Express, COBSEO et al) and negative social media traffic in relation to the rebranding of Poppy Cabs. The Executive Director of Membership, Nina Villa, has provided us the background to this issue to give you sight of the statement the RBL has issued in response which will help you respond if you get any queries.

Background Information

RBL's discussions with Poppy Cabs were intended to protect and properly manage RBL's trademarks, which are closely linked to our charitable and fundraising work, while enabling Poppy Cabs to continue providing its important service to veterans. As custodian of the Poppy brand, the RBL has a responsibility to ensure it is used appropriately and with permission.

RBL offered a royalty-free licence which would have allowed that use to continue with RBL's permission. No fee or payment was requested or proposed, either then or in the future.

RBL's intention was to reach an agreement that would allow Poppy Cabs to continue using the name and logo. At all times, the focus was on dialogue and resolution rather than formal legal action. Poppy Cabs ultimately decided not to take up the licence and instead chose to change its name. RBL respects that decision and will continue to support Cabs-for-Veterans, its volunteer drivers and marshals, and the valuable service they provide.

RBL Media Statement

"Poppy Cabs has provided remarkable support to veterans over the past 16 years, making a real difference to many people attending Remembrance events, particularly those who may otherwise have struggled to do so. The RBL has been in discussions with Poppy Cabs regarding a free-of-charge licensing agreement for the use of the Poppy in its name and logo. Poppy Cabs ultimately decided not to take up the licence and instead changed its name to Cabs-for-Veterans.

“We will continue to work with Cabs-for-Veterans, its volunteer drivers and marshals, to provide this valuable service, and they have our support and gratitude.”

Hints and Tips

- Complete the Branch Secretaries Course on Discover.
- Keep all your correspondence (minutes etc) on MAP in the Branch Admin Area. Do not keep onyour personal PC
- Always use your rbl.community email account for all official RBL communications.
- Keep up to date with all the latest news etc by reading Central News each month as well as County Newsletter and updates.
- Keep an eye on membership levels and renewals and chase where necessary (date on MAP in the Branch Admin Area). Inform the Chair if you have any new members.

- Complete the Treasurers Course on Discover.
- Use the RBL account advanced Excel spreadsheet and keep the original version in the Branch Admin Area on MAP.
- Do not use your personal PC for accounting records
- Always use your rbl.community email account for all official RBL communications
- Change to the on-line Lloyds bank account -contact the MEO to get started.
- All payments to individuals must be supported by an official RBL claim form with receipts.
- Payments to businesses must be supported by an invoice.
- If you need help with accounts, contact the County Treasurer

Membership Fee Increase and Making a Difference

On the 04 Sep 26 the Membership Fee increased from £22 to £24. The fee increase follows the Motion passed at Annual Conference 2024. This will help us provide the best service to our valued members and ensure that membership remains at the very heart of our charity. Your membership fee and support ensures that the Armed Forces Community has someone to turn to for practical help, comradeship or a voice speaking up on their behalf. Our members, Branches and Clubs remain essential to everything the Royal British Legion achieves.

Over the last year your membership has helped:

- Raise £51.4 million through the Poppy Appeal providing life changing support to our beneficiaries.

- Expand or Branch Community Support (BCS) programme reducing social isolation through 1617 home visits, 189 hospital visits and 4055 phone calls via 365 dedicated volunteers in 2025.
- Increase awareness of our services by sign-posting individuals who may need support.
- Strengthen local and national Remembrance events support by dedicated Standard Bearers.
- Champion the rights of serving and ex-service personnel and their families through our campaigns such as the "Credit their Service" campaign.

Work continues to improve the membership experience. Members can get involved in local and national events, join clubs and special interest groups or connect through online opportunities such as our Gamers' Group and Membership Townhalls. We are also enhancing access to the Annual Conference with digital attendee option for those unable to join.

Renewing your membership helps the RBL to continue this impactful work. It supports the Armed Forces community, honours those who have served and strengthens our ability to provide help through out the year.

Credit their Service Campaign

Campaigning for an end to the unjust benefits system.

The Royal British Legion's 'Credit their Service' campaign demands an end to the unjust treatment of military compensation as income by welfare benefit means tests. This results in veterans and their families missing out on thousands of pounds a year.150,000 veterans and their families receive compensation awarded by the government for the pain and loss they endured while in the Armed Forces. This compensation is unfairly counted as normal income when applying for many welfare benefits. It is a glaring disadvantage because civil compensation awarded by courts, such as for personal injury or medical negligence, is exempt. Military and civilian compensation should be treated the same.

Pension Credit

Pension Credit offers a lifeline for those over State Pension Age. It is paid to those on low income, below the amount the UK Government says a person needs to live on. One million UK veterans were over 65 in the 2021 Census, with an estimated 146,000 eligible for Pension Credit. By treating military compensation as income, some of our poorest veterans and their families are denied Pension Credit. They are missing out on thousands of pounds of support that civilians can access.

Local Benefits

This problem includes benefits paid out by local councils. This includes:

- Housing Benefit, for help with the cost of rent
- Council Tax Support, for a reduction in Council Tax payments
- Discretionary Housing Payments, for help with housing costs
- Disabled Facilities Grants, for helping making changes to a home

RBL estimates that over 10,000 local benefits awards per year involve military compensation. When surveyed in late 2022, four in five (80%) British councils unfairly treated this as income. In recent years, RBL has worked with over 50 councils to ensure they no longer treat military compensation as income in their means-tested benefits.

Examples include the council does not have a policy for that benefit or they don't administer it.

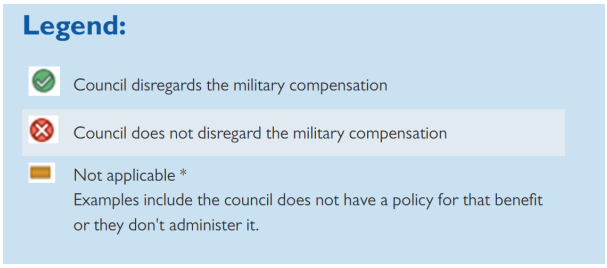
We are grateful to the councils which already do not treat military compensation as income in means tests. If your council is still treating some military compensation as income, please contact us and we will work with you to address this.

To contact us, please email

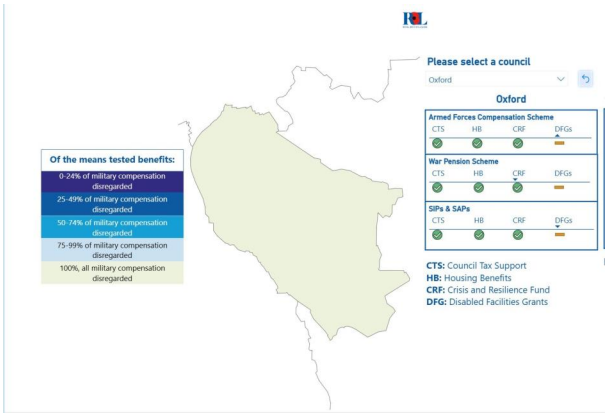
In 2011, the UK pledged the Armed Forces Covenant. This is a promise which states that those who serve or have served should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens. The Royal British Legion believes that any treatment of military compensation as income breaks this promise.

We call on councils to use their powers and do the right thing. Councils should make sure they do not treat compensation as income.

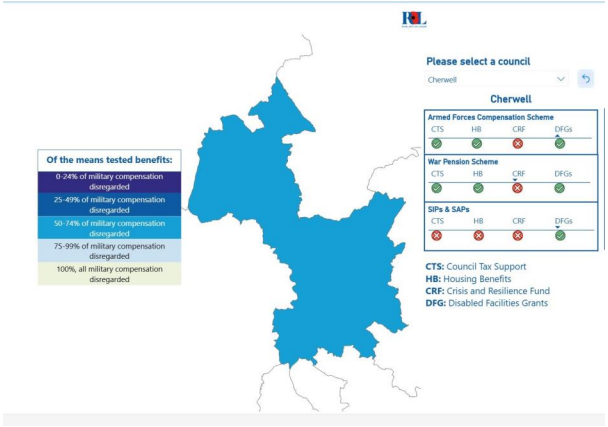
We urge the UK Government to change the law. It should act to ensure military compensation is not counted as income by means tests.



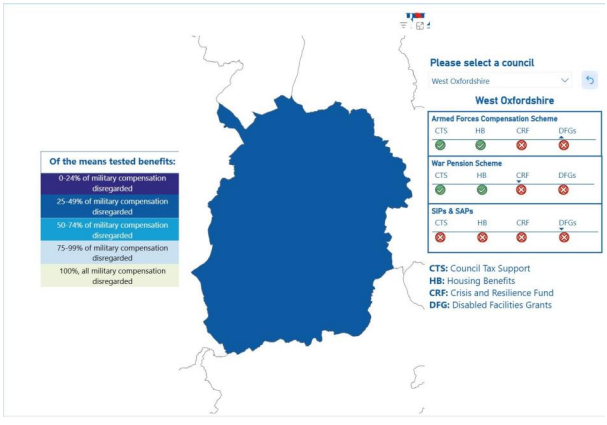
1 - Legend for the Charts Below



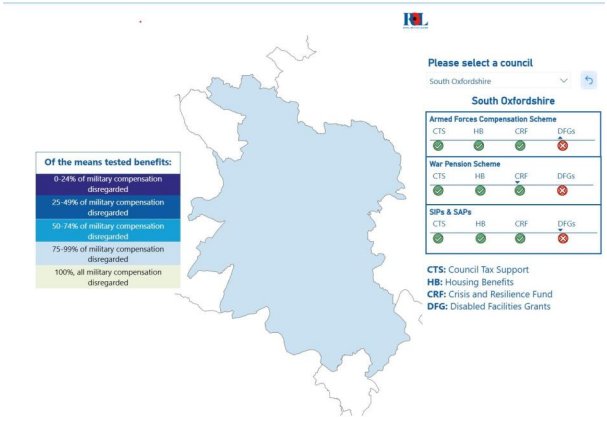
2 - Oxford Council



3 - Cherwell Council



4 - West Oxfordshire Council



5 - South Oxfordshire Council

Annual Branch MS1, MS1b and MS1CSB Submission (Mandatory) - Rob Lovesey County Secretary

MS1A and MS1CSB - Mandatory

To ensure and maintain Branch Compliance every Branch and CSB ***must*** complete annually a MS1A or for CSBs the MS1CSB which details the Branch Committee Membership or Points of Contact for CSBs. This is a mandatory requirement for all Branches. ***Note: Branches and CSBs must hold their Annual General Meeting between 01 Oct - 30 Nov annually without exception. This is the time that Branch Committee positions are ratified by the Committee and the MS1A/MS1CSB must be signed and completed. The MS1b(Standard Bearers) must also be completed at this meeting to ensure that the Standard Bearer is covered by the Public Liability Insurance - no completed and submitted MS1b to the MEO and County Secretary then your Standard cannot be paraded.***

In 2024 the MS1A/MS1CSB separated the MS1b(Standard Bearer) Forms, therefore Branches and CSBs must complete the two forms. In is recommended that Branches and CSB submit their completed MS forms two weeks prior to the 31 Dec deadline. In 2025 the forms were further undated with only certain roles that need to sign the forms, but still requires Branch Officers to be listed.

The ***31st of December*** is the cut-off date for the return of the fully completed MS1 Forms. In addition a Compliant Branch that has submitted their MS1 forms can:

- propose a motion at the county AGM for Annual Conference.
- send delegates to both county and annual conferences.
- apply for county grants.
- vote in elections for the Trustees and the Membership Council.

It is every branch's responsibility to ensure that its members have a voice in shaping the membership for the good and benefit of our Armed Forces community. To summarise, achieving compliance means that your branch can play a full and active role in the governance of RBL membership.

MS1b(Standard Bearer) Return - Mandatory

Standard Bearers are you aware that you are required annually to complete the MS1b Form, you are required to complete your Branch MS1b following your Branch AGM. If not, ***you cannot carry out the duties of your Branch Standard Bearer.*** Branch Compliance under the terms of the Royal Charter and the Membership Handbook requires all Branches including County Supported Branches (CSBs) are to complete and submit the requisite MS1b From, this ensures that you have read and understood the responsibilities and risks associated with Standard Bearing, including but not limited to:

Standard bearing is a physical activity and so a self declaration that you both physically fit and strong enough to carry a Standard in all reasonable weather conditions. As a Standard Bearer you will be expected to be able to carry a Standard which is 8ft long and up to 3.5kg in weight (in wet or windy weather conditions Standards may become heavier and difficult to hold upright). Some actions such as Dips may put a strain on the back and shoulders. Competitions and Remembrance events may prove demanding and stressful for some.

- Your confirmation if you are in receipt of any disability related allowance or benefit, you will inform the appropriate authorities of your intention to undertake the role of Standard Bearer/Deputy Standard Bearer as this may affect your eligibility status.
- You have no physical conditions or disability that could potentially put me or others at harm whilst performing my duties as a Standard Bearer/Deputy Standard Bearer. If I have, or suspect I have, a health problem which means I may not be able to fulfil all duties required of the role safely, I undertake to inform the appropriate Ceremonial Officer in charge of the competition/Remembrance event.

Additionally, if you have not completed the MS1b you may not be covered by the Public Liability Insurance.

On Completion these Forms are to be submitted to the County MEO (Lebo Nyoni - ***Oxfordshire.MEO@RBL.Community***)) and the County Secretary (Rob Lovesey) on ***Oxfordshire.Secretary@RBL.Community***.

Rob

Behind the Headsets of the RBL Contact Centre

Seven days a week, the team at the Royal British Legion's Advice and Information Line are often the first voices members of the Armed Forces community hear when they are most in need.

The role is described by those who do it as impactful, compassionate and rewarding. Every day brings new challenges, with advisers supporting people facing a wide range of circumstances, from homelessness and poor mental health to sudden financial crises. Each conversation requires empathy, sound judgement and a clear understanding of the support available.

Before support can be arranged, advisers follow important procedures to verify identities, protect personal information and create accurate records. Once a case is opened and essential details have been gathered, they assess the caller's situation to understand the level of support required and identify any risks or urgent needs.

The Advice and Information Line operates a structured three-step triage system. Cases are categorised as standard, high or urgent before being routed according to postcode, allowing a dedicated local caseworker to provide ongoing support. This approach helps ensure that assistance is both timely and tailored to local needs.

A typical day begins with logging into systems and reviewing updates before handling a mix of phone calls, emails, live chats and follow-up actions. Many enquiries relate to immediate financial pressures, including food costs, rent, mortgage payments and energy bills, but no two interactions are the same.

These are far from routine customer service conversations. Advisers frequently support individuals during some of the most difficult periods of their lives, providing reassurance, guidance and practical help. The emotional impact of these calls can often stay with team members long after their working day has ended.

Alongside urgent welfare cases, the team also responds to a variety of general enquiries. These might include questions about purchasing a poppy or requests for a standard bearer to attend a funeral. The diversity of enquiries means advisers never know exactly what the next call will bring.

Teamwork plays a vital role in the contact centre's success. Colleagues regularly share knowledge, discuss complex situations and provide support to one another. Whether working remotely or on site, communication systems ensure advisers remain connected and able to access guidance quickly, helping to deliver a consistent service.

The role demands both technical knowledge and strong interpersonal skills. While some advisers come from military backgrounds, many do not. All receive training to help them understand the Armed Forces community and the support available through the RBL.

The work can be emotionally complex and requires resilience, adaptability and strong problem-solving abilities. Despite the challenges, team members consistently describe the role as highly rewarding, knowing that their support can make a real difference to the lives of those who have served and their families.

Knowledge Burst for Branches - Serving Armed Forces Membership

Membership Matters: Understanding the Difference for Serving Personnel

A number of Branches are unaware that serving members of the Armed Forces can hold one of two different types of Royal British Legion membership: **Military Membership** or **Branch Membership**.

Understanding the distinction is important, as each comes with different rights, responsibilities and levels of participation.

Military Membership (Free Digital Membership) - Military Membership is available free of charge to serving members of the UK Armed Forces, including both Regular and Reserve personnel. This digital-only membership keeps individuals connected to the Legion through regular communications and updates. However, Military Members are **National Digital Members only** and are **not affiliated with a Branch**. As a result, they do not have membership rights at Branch, County or National level. They cannot vote, propose or second motions, or hold a Branch Officer position. To become involved in Branch governance or activities, they must take out a paid Branch Membership.

Branch Membership (Paid Membership) - Branch Membership provides the full range of Legion membership benefits and enables members to play an active role within the organisation. Branch Members can:

- Join up to four Branches.Vote at Branch meetings, including AGMs.
- Propose and second motions.
- Serve as Committee Members or Branch Officers.

- Access member benefits, including priority access to Festival of Remembrance ticket sales.
- Participate fully in Branch and County activities.
- Members may choose to remain inactive within a Branch or become actively involved in its administration and leadership.

Why It Matters?

While both membership types connect serving personnel with the Royal British Legion, only **Branch Membership** provides the rights and privileges associated with Branch participation and governance. Ensuring Branches understand these differences will help avoid confusion and ensure that membership rules are applied consistently across the organisation.

In short, **Military Membership provides a connection to the Legion, while Branch Membership provides full participation in its democratic and administrative processes.**

Ceremonial Update Pete Clarke

With Remembrance coming up fast, we have one Standard Bearer School training session left for the year on the 25th of October at Stanton Harcourt Village Hall, from 09:00 to 11:30. Again, this is in full uniform to ensure those that came to the last session in uniform have had time to make any adjustments required to their uniform.

On the subject of training for Standard Bearers (SB's), with the requirement from Haig House that **ALL** RBL and WRBL SB's must now attend at least a minimum of one County Parade Marshal led training session a year, if an SB only wants to do the one session, then they must be correctly dressed as laid out in the Ceremonial Handbook (CHB).

Branches are reminded that when taking part in local parades, that the local civic authorities' responsibility for road closures, traffic management plans and risk assessments, as they are the owners of the parades.

In the New Year we shall be looking to run the Branch Ceremonial Advisors Training Course that has been produced by the National Team. It must be stressed that this only an advisory role and does not qualify anyone to become or act as a Parade Marshal (PM), only those who have completed the National Ceremonial PM course and having achieved the correct grading and are named on the National Ceremonial Register are allowed to carry out PM duties.

Please ensure that your SB's are correctly dressed as laid out in the CHB, and should have any questions on anything uniform or Standard Bearing, please get in touch.

Our County Standard Bearer competition will take place this year on the 28th of November at Nettlebed Village Hall, doors open at 08:30 for a 10:00 start. Please do come along and show your support for our Standard Bearers taking part, it would be lovely to see you.

Pete

RBL Oxfordshire Standard Bearer Competition

The RBL Oxfordshire County Standard Bearer Competition is to be held on 28 Nov 26 at Nettlebed Village Hall. Those wish further details are invited to contact Pete Clarke the County Parade Marshal on Oxfordshire.ParadeMarshal@RBL.Community.

Branch Standard Bearers are encouraged to enter the annual RBL Oxfordshire County Standard Bearer Competition, which will be held on 28 Nov 26 at Nettlebed Village Hall. Even if your Branch Standard Bearers do not wish to compete, the event provides an excellent opportunity to come together, observe the competition, share experiences, and meet fellow Standard Bearers from across the County. We would be delighted to see as many Standard Bearers and supporters as possible in attendance, helping to make the day both enjoyable and successful.

Training - "Discover" Portal

The Royal British Legion (RBL) is incorporated by a Royal Charter, which serves as its governing document, outlining its objectives, powers, structure, management, and rules. It functions similarly to a constitution and is a legally binding document recognised by the Charity Commission and the government.

Key aspects of the RBL Royal Charter

- **Incorporation**: The Charter incorporates the RBL, making it a single legal entity rather than an association of individuals under the Companies Act.
- **History**:

1. The first Charter was granted to the British Legion in 1925 by King George V.
2. The organisation received "royal status" and became "The Royal British Legion" in 1971.
3. The original Charter has been updated over the years by various Supplemental Charters to adapt to the changing needs of the ex-Service community.
4. The most recent version of the Charter (version 17) is dated 17 Jul 25

Purpose and Objects:

The Charter sets out the RBL's charitable objects, which broadly include relieving the need, suffering, and distress of beneficiaries and their dependants, promoting education and resettlement, and commemorating those who have died in service.

Governance:

The Charter details how the organisation is to be run, including the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees, the Annual Conference, and the membership.

Amendments:

Motions for amendments to the Charter can be put forward by members at the Annual Conference and must be subsequently ratified by the Board of Trustees. Any changes only take effect if approved by the King in Council.

You can view the full Royal Charter and Rules on the official

Branch Training Requirements

All Branch Officers and Committee members should attend training sessions commensurate to their role in the Branch. A useful guide to Branch (and County) Roles including the relevant Terms of Reference can be found at the embedded document.

The County Training Officer (CTO) can be contacted Oxfordshire.CTO@RBL.Community

TRAINING NEWS

There is now a great selection of development and management training which members may find beneficial, especially if you are new to an Officer or Committee post in your branch. All these are now available on the Discover Training Portal which everyone can register on and then book those courses you would like to do. Some are on-line only whilst others might need you to attend face-to-face. The following are currently available:

- Branch Management (***mandatory for all Branch Officers***)
- County Management (***mandatory for all County Officers***)
- County Training Officer
- County Recruiting Officer
- Branch Recruiting Advisor
- Branch Treasurer (***mandatory for all Branch Treasurers***)
- LOMAS (recommended for all new users of LOMAS)
- Independent Examiner (mandatory for all IE prior to registration with the County
- Secretaries Course (Branch and County) ***(new)***
- Branch Community Support Branch Community Support Coordinator ***(mandatory for all BCS Coordinators)***
- Branch Community Support (BCS) - New Coordinator ***(mandatory for all new Coordinators)***
- Branch Community Support Refresher (***to be completed every 2 years by BCS Staff***)
- Informal Resolution

- Outlook Navigation
- Safeguarding Adults (***mandatory for all Branch Officers and Standard Bearers***)
- Safeguarding Children (***mandatory for all Branch Officers and Standard Bearers***)
- Data Protection (***mandatory for all Branch and County Officers***)

For further details including Course Prospectus, guidance on how to register and use Discover, please contact Oxfordshire.CTO@RBL.Community

Keeping in Contact - RBL Community E-Mail Addresses

Diary Dates

County Forthcoming Events and Key Dates

- **01 Oct – 30 Nov 25** – Branch Annual General Meetings to be held between these dates. MS1/MS1B/MS1CSB to be completed. (Branches Note: MS1B must be completed in addition to MS1 or MS1CSB otherwise Branch and Standard Bearer not compliant
- **21 Oct 26 –** RBL Oxfordshire County Committee Meeting
- **28 Nov 26** - Oxfordshire County Standard Bearer Competition - Nettlebed Village Hall
- **01 Dec 26 -** Release of the December Edition of the County Newsletter
- **31 Dec 26 –** Deadline for the submission of all ***MS1s or MS1CSBs and MS1Bs*** to the MEO and County Secretary by email
- **30 Jan 27** – 102nd Oxfordshire Annual County Conference – Carterton Community Hall
- **07-09 May -** RBL National Conference Telford Shropshire

County Standard Bearer Training Dates

The CPM will be announcing shortly the Standard Bearer Training Programme for Branch SBs now that the 2026 programme has been completed. Watch out for Branch Emails and updates in the County Newsletters.

Remember that is now mandatory that all Branch Standard Bearers must attend at least one Standard Bearer Training Session with the County Parade Marshal in uniform. Non-attendance to at least one session per annum will mean that Branch Standards will not be permitted to parade on any circumstances.

Note that the Oxfordshire Standard Bearer Competition will be held on 28 Nov 26

Poppy Appeal Key Dates

- **The Oxfordshire 2027 Poppy Appeal Seminar** - dates to be confirmed
- **2027 Poppy Appeal -** 21 Oct 27 to 14 Nov 27
- **London Poppy Day** expected to be on Thursday 04 Nov 27
- **Festival of Remembrance**, Royal Albert Hall Saturday 06 November 2027
- **Remembrance Sunday** is on 14 November 2027

Events

81st Anniversary of the End of Hostilities in Japan Commemoration Bladon

As Europe celebrated the surrender of German forces on VE Day, thousands of British, Commonwealth and Allied Armed Forces personnel were still involved in bitter fighting in the Far East and the Pacific. Victory over Japan Day on 15 August marks the surrender of Japan forces, which in effect ended the Second World War. For months after VE Day on 8 May 1945 war continued to wage in the Asia-Pacific region and only came to an end after two atomic bombs were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Soviet Forces declared war on Japan.

The 15 Aug 26 to mark the 81st Anniversary a commemoration service was held at the graveside of Sir Winston Churchill in the grounds of the Parish Church of St Martin, Bladon. The event was organised by the Parachute Regiment, led by John Hall, with support from the Royal British Legion National Chair Lynda Atkins, Oxfordshire County Royal British Legion Chair, Fiona Lovesey. The commemoration was emotionally charged with participants having direct links to the war in the Far East. Veterans from the Parachute Regiment were in attendance including a remarkable 89 year veteran Bob who read the Airbourne Prayer. The Last post was played by a Rifles Regiment Bugler. Rev Sarah Bourne the Rector of ST Martin conducted the service.

Stanton Harcourt and Sutton Branch Families Day - 12 Sep 26

On 12th September the RBL Stanton Harcourt and Sutton Branch held a Families Day to remember the role that RAF Stanton Harcourt played in WW2, through the display of military vehicles, historic archives and photos, music from the Brize Norton Military Wives Choir, a treasure hunt and the Red Line Home Guard reenactors.

The Family Day was officially opened by Ron Spurs, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, who himself served in the RAF.

RAF Stanton Harcourt opened on September 3rd, 1940, as a satellite bomber station and training base for RAF Abingdon for No.10 Operational Training Unit (OTU) flying Whitley and Halifax aircraft. It launched the historic raid on the Scharnhorst in July 1941 and Winston Churchill's departure in Liberator AL504 on January 13th, 1943, to the Casablanca Conference, where he met U.S. President Franklin D Roosevelt to plan future military strategy. Flying ended following VE Day in 1945, leading to formal closure under RAF Abingdon's control on January 15, 1946.

The Family Day supported the RBLs' strategy to 'connect' and 'remember' and we had over 150 people joining us on the day. We hope we were able to create an enjoyable afternoon and bring the role of our Airfield in WW2 to life, especially for the younger generation.

Royal British Legion Banbury Joins Battle of Britain Commemoration - 13 Sep 26

The Royal British Legion was among other organisations that support this years Banbury's 2026 Battle of Britain commemoration, helping the town honour those who served in the defining campaign of World War II. Lead by the County Parade Marshal Pete Clarke, County Standard Bearer with the Union Standard (Tjark Andrews), the Deputy County Standard Bearer with the County Standard (Natalie Buxton), Branch Standard Bearers from Banbury (Vanessa Page), Chipping Norton Branch (Anthony Davies), Henley Branch (John Green), Nettlebed and District Branch (David Mannering).

Organised by Banbury Town Council, the civic event took place on Sunday 13 September. A military parade travelled from the Market Place through the town centre to St Mary's Church, where a memorial service featured hymns, readings and poems in tribute to the RAF aircrew remembered as "The Few". The parade then returned towards Banbury Town Hall.

The involvement of Royal British Legion Banbury and Standard Bearers from across the County placed the branch alongside the Royal Air Force, 1460 (Banbury) Squadron Air Cadets, Sea Cadets Banbury, Banbury RAFA Club, Thames Valley Police and other local representatives. Its participation reflected the Legion's enduring place in community remembrance: bringing veterans, service organisations and residents together to ensure that sacrifice is remembered and its meaning passed to future generations.

Banbury's annual commemoration keeps that history visible while giving the community an opportunity to reflect together—and Royal British Legion Banbury's support remains an important part of that shared act of remembrance.

Roll of Honour

- **Late Graham Bough** – RBL Chipping Branch former Branch Deputy Standard Bearer and British Army – funeral held on 06 Aug 26 at Banbury Crematorium.
- **Late Graham Hope** – RBL Banbury Branch former Royal Air Force – funeral held on 23 Sep 26 at Banbury Crematorium.

Join our Facebook Page

Oxfordshire County Royal British Legion

Royal British Legion New Facebook Group

Our new Membership Facebook Group goes live!

We are thrilled to announce the launch of our membership-exclusive Facebook group! The group has been created so that members can share their good news stories, share thoughts and ideas, and hear updates from RBL.

To join, you need to have a Facebook account. You will be asked to verify your RBL membership and, once approved by admins, you are in!

There are house rules, which you will see on joining but we hope that this will be a new and fun way for our members to connect with each other.

Kindly note, questions about your membership should be send to **membershipservices@britishlegion.org.uk.**

Find and join the group by searching on Facebook for Members of the Royal British Legion or using https://www.facebook.com/groups/membersoftheroyalbritishlegion?

You may share the link with other members. From July, we will begin sending out email invitations to members, in stages by region, to ensure that as many as possible have the opportunity to join. See you in the group!

RBL Oxfordshire Web-Page

6 - Keep updated with RBL Oxfordshire information at

https://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/oxfordshire

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Oxfordshire Veterans Group