Royal British Legion Scotland Branch Handbook



Version 2

Published 2026

This Handbook has been written with the sole purpose of providing general understanding of charity compliance, governance related matters and Office Bearer roles and general administration for Royal British Legion Scotland Branches.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information supplied is accurate and up to date at the time of production.

All information has been sources from relevant government and governance agencies and in conjunction with the Royal British Legion Scotland governing document, The Constitution (Adopted 23rd May 2025 and approved by OSCR February 2026).

This is a working document which will be updated throughout the year and redistributed as salient changes are made.

Any suggestions amendments, inclusions or relevant comments should be forwarded to Head Office to info@legionscotland.org.uk

Branch Handbook

Produced and distributed by Royal British Legion Scotland

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This Branch Handbook (Version 2) supersedes the original Handbook, which was first published in 2014.

Amendments (this section will be used to highlight regular amendments for ease of reference)

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Overview

This guide has been created as a means of familiarising those who are new to Committees, and new to working with charities, with the kinds of things they should expect (and are expected of them) as a Branch Committee Member.

The Handbook describes the objectives and activities of Royal British Legion Scotland, hereinafter referred to as RBLS.

Purpose of the Branch Handbook

The purpose of the Handbook is to provide guidance to aid you in understanding the commitment to being a Committee Member of a Branch. The Handbook provides the following information:

- Broad overview of the key legislative requirements for Branch Committee Members.
- Overview of the features of good governance practices.
- Practical tips and templates to assist in fulfilling your committee responsibilities.

The intent of this Handbook is to be a tool to facilitate improved understanding of legal obligations and better practices and to present some ideas and resources to contribute to the implementation of effective governance and efficient administration practices within your Branch.

The contents of the Handbook are based on legislative requirements and relevant RBLS best practice at the time of production and distribution.

The Handbook will be reviewed annually (or as and when required, if legislation and internal procedures change) and will be updated accordingly.

The Constitution of Royal British Legion Scotland

The Constitution of the Royal British Legion Scotland is the governing document and principle under which the charity is run. The current Constitution was adopted by the membership on the 23rd of May 2025 and approved by OSCR in February 2026.

This Handbook is the management guide for all Branches in the adoption and administration of all required practices, policies and good governance for the charity and is a supplement to the Constitution.

All Committee members and members of RBSL should be familiar with the contents of the Constitution and this Handbook.

Copies of both documents are available on the RBLS website.

Head Office will confirm annually to Branches the version of the Constitution and Handbook which are in use. Current versions of both will supersede any previously issued and all out of date or older versions should be destroyed locally.

1. Structure of Royal British Legion Scotland

1.1 National Board of Trustees (NBT)

The governance and affairs of RBLS are managed and controlled by the National Board of Trustees. The Board is constituted of 14 representatives as follows:

- National President
- National Chair (Elected)
- National Vice Chair (Elected)
- National Treasurer
- 2 elected representatives per Area

As per the Constitution the NBT may co-opt additional Trustees as circumstances require.

The NBT have the authority to appoint an Honorary Vice President at their discretion.

The function of the NBT is detailed in Clause 8 of the Constitution.

All Trustees are subject to a PVG check with Disclosure Scotland and must return the required documents and be PVG cleared before they can take their position on the Board.

Elected members of the NBT will serve an initial term of 3 years. Those retiring after one term are eligible for re-election by their Area, provided they serve no more than two consecutive terms of 3 years. A member may be re-elected for a third term provided there has been gap of 2 years since completion of their second term.

All Trustees, in exercising their functions as an NBT member must always act in the best interests of RBLS.

On appointment all Trustees are required to read and sign the documents provided in their induction pack which include an explanation of the Trustee role, Governance Code, Skills Audit, Assessment Survey, Register of Interests, Fit and Proper Persons Declaration and Conflicts of Interest policy.

NBT members must avoid any situations in which they have an interest or duty which conflicts or possibly may conflict with the interests of the SCIO.

An NBT Trustee will be deemed to have an interest in a proposed transaction or arrangement under consideration by the SCIO if:

- the proposed transaction or arrangement is or includes the provision of remuneration by the SCIO to that NBT Trustee, or to a person connected to that NBT Trustee in terms of section 68(2) of the 2005 Act, for services provided to or on behalf of the SCIO
- they have any other interest, direct or indirect (including but not limited to any personal financial interest), in the proposed transaction or arrangement.

- a person, firm, or limited company with whom or with which they are deemed to be connected in terms of section 68(2) of the 2005 Act has an interest, direct or indirect, (including but not limited to any personal financial interest), in the proposed transaction or arrangement.

unless

- the proposed transaction or arrangement is not one which falls within the scope of Article 62.2(i) and is such that it cannot reasonably be regarded as likely to give rise to a conflict of interest; or
- the only benefit to them is the payment by the SCIO of a premium for indemnity insurance for the benefit of the NBT Trustees of the SCIO

An NBT Trustee who has an interest shall be known as a "**Conflicted Trustee**".

A Conflicted Trustee must declare the nature and extent of their interest to the NBT Trustees, unless Board members are already aware of it or ought reasonably to be aware of it. Any declaration must be made before the proposed transaction or arrangement has been entered into by the SCIO, or, where it relates to an existing transaction or arrangement, as soon as is reasonably practicable. A declaration by a Conflicted Trustee must be made

- at a meeting of the NBT Trustees at or before the time discussion begins on the matter.
- or by notice in writing to the other NBT Trustees.

If the declaration proves to be or becomes inaccurate or incomplete, a further declaration must be made.

The SCIO shall maintain a Register of Interests which shall be reviewed at least annually and updated as necessary, and which shall be open to inspection at any time by all NBT Trustees. Where an interest has been entered in the Register of Interests, the other NBT Trustees shall be deemed to be aware of it.

Where a Conflicted Trustee has an interest in a matter to be discussed at a meeting of the NBT Trustees, they must, unless the other NBT Trustees authorise them to do otherwise

- declare the nature and extent of their interest.
- after providing any information requested by the NBT Trustees, take no part in any discussions of the NBT Trustees and, if required by the Chair, withdraw from the meeting for that item.
- take no part in the deliberations.
- not be counted in the quorum for that part of the meeting.
- withdraw from the meeting during the vote and have no vote on the matter.

Where the non-conflicted NBT Trustees are satisfied that it is in the best interests of the SCIO to do so, they may, provided that they form a quorum authorise the conflicted Trustee to:

- participate in deliberations and/or to vote.
- disclose to a third-party information confidential to the SCIO.
- take any other action not otherwise authorised.
- refrain from taking any action required to remove the conflict.

All those who take a position on the Board are expected to fully understand the duties they are taking on and must have a good working knowledge of charity governance. Induction training is provided along with training throughout the year on key topics and regulatory changes.

Trustees are expected to attend at least 3 meetings a year and to represent their Area at Annual Conference.

All Trustees are expected to communicate regularly with their Area Executive Committee and to attend Area meetings as they are vital conduit of information between the National Board of Trustees and the Areas/Branches.

All Trustees are expected to be ambassadors for the RBLS in all their activities and to treat other members of the Board with respect as well as acting in the best interests of the charity.

A strong Board of Trustees is essential to running the charity well. The Board provides leadership and makes sure the organisation follows its charitable aims, governing rules and the law.

In Scotland, trustees share legal responsibility under the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). They must act with care, diligence and in the best interests of the charity. The Board is responsible for managing finances properly, overseeing risks and ensuring clear accountability. This protects the charity's assets, reputation and long-term future. A strong Board also helps create a positive culture based on transparency, integrity and public trust.

1.2 Area Executive Committees

There are currently 5 geographical Areas within RBLS:

- Aberdeen, Banff & Kincardine
- Angus, Perthshire & Fife
- Edinburgh Lothian & Borders
- Glasgow, Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway
- Highlands & Islands

As per the Constitution each Area appoints an Area Executive Committee who manage and control the Area in line with the Constitution.

Area Executive Committees are normally formed of:

- President
- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer

National Board of Trustee representatives should also be included on the Area Executive if not already holding one of the above-mentioned roles.

Area Executives have the power to employ such staff or additional Area Executive Committee members as they may consider necessary to ensure the roles and responsibilities of the Area are carried out effectively.

Areas are required to complete an LA2 form annually to confirm all members of their Area Executive Committee, their roles and contact information.

1.2.1 What does a well-functioning Area look like?

Although it is not a one size fits all template, as there is variance between the Areas in terms of their geographical size and the number of Branches, Clubs and members, there are key functions that are expected of any RBLS Area, including but not limited to:

- Holding an AGM annually prior to the 8th of February
- Holding at least 3 further meetings per annum
- Keeping a good account of Area funds and providing an annual report and accounts for the members to approve
- Provision of regular updates and minutes from Area meetings to all Branches and Clubs
- Regular liaison with all Branches and Clubs that are affiliated to that Area
- Efficient day-to-day operations within the Area to ensure good support and guidance for all Branches and Clubs affiliated to that Area
- Efficient and competent handling of all complaints and disciplinary matters that require Area input or intervention

- Regular liaison with Head Office staff on communications which have been circulated to Branches and Clubs
- Good promotion of communications from Head Office to ensure awareness across Branches and Clubs
- Holding Branches accountable for submission of required administrative returns and annual accounts to ensure 100% return on LA1 forms, Licence Agreements and accounts etc.
- Ensuring Branches are keeping their membership information up to date and paying membership invoices from Head Office on time and in full.
- Promotion of RBLS Best Kept War Memorial Competition, Comradeship Programme, National Standard Bearing, key commemorative events, and Remembrance to ensure these are well attended and have participation from across all Areas.
- Participation in the quarterly Operational Team Meetings with Head Office

Areas have a crucial role in the good governance and efficient functioning of the organisation as they are in essence the conduit between the NBT and CEO and their Branches and Clubs. Head Office relies on the Areas to disseminate key information to their members and to also provide updates back to Head Office on the activity within their Areas and to highlight any issues that may arise.

A well-functioning Area should be able to demonstrate regular interaction and communication with all their Branches and Clubs. Such interactions foster good relationships across the entire geographical Area, which then allows for development of initiatives such as an Area Conference, Area Sports (if a programme is provided), opportunities for comradeship events and much more.

1.2.2 Area Council

Each Area has an Area Council made up of representatives from all Branches in that Area. Branches can nominate one representative per 100 members up to a maximum of four to sit on the Area Council.

Branches should use the annual LA1 form to confirm who their Area Council representatives are.

Those who form the Area Council on behalf of the Branch should attend Area meetings as often as possible so they are able to participate in discussions and decisions and gather pertinent information and updates to take back to the Branch from Area.

1.3 Head Office

There are 11 employees within Head Office, (2 of which are part-time).

Chief Executive
Dr Claire Armstrong OBE

Office Coordinator
Vicki Larkin
Phone: 0131 322 1076
Email: v.larkin@legionscotland.org.uk

Database & Membership Manager
Alastair Duff
Phone: 0131 550 1586
Email: a.duff@legionscotland.org.uk

Events Manager
Brian Ward
Phone: 0131 550 1583
Email: b.ward@legionscotland.org.uk

Events & Communications Coordinator
Claudea Rizzo
Phone: 0131 550 1583
Email: c.rizzo@legionscotland.org.uk

Accounts Manager
Lorna Kane
Phone: 0131 550 1548
Email: l.kane@legionscotland.org.uk

Accounts Support
Alan Hayes (part time)
Phone: 0131 550 1548
Email: a.hayes@legionscotland.org.uk

Head of Pensions & Advocacy
Neil Robinson
Phone: 0131 550 1565
Email: n.robinson@legionscotland.org.uk

Deputy Pensions Appeals Officer
James Johnston
Phone: 0131 550 1566
Email: j.johnston@legionscotland.org.uk

Veterans Community Support Manager

Rory McIntrye (part time)
Phone: 0131 550 1560
Email: r.mcintyre@legionscotland.org.uk

Veterans Community Support & Membership Administrator
Sally Orr Ewing
Phone: 0131 322 1062
Email: s.orrewing@legionscotland.org.uk

Where to direct your enquiries:

Nature of Enquiry	Direct to
General enquiries & Branch support	Office Coordinator
Events, comradeship & Remembrance (including Best Kept War Memorial and National Standard Bearing)	Events Team
Gift Aid, direct debit, investments, accounts, SCIO and general finance	Accounts Team and Database & Membership Manager
Pensions	Pensions Team
Welfare, befriending, general support for veterans	Veterans Community Support Team
All membership matters	Database & Membership Manager

1.4 Royal British Legion Scotland Branches

Branches of RBLS exist to:

- further the interests of RBLS and promote this through working within the local community.
- advance the charitable aims and objectives of RBLS as per the Constitution.
- promote comradeship amongst RBLS members, Branches and Clubs in the Area, other ex-service organisations and the local community.
- provide befriending and welfare support locally.
- hold regular branch meetings to discuss matters of mutual interest.

1.4.1 Formation of a Branch

- If there is significant local interest to form a new RBLS Branch the appropriate Area Executive should be contacted to confirm the intention.
- The Area Executive is required to ensure the National Board of Trustees is notified at the outset of the process as the formation of any new RBLS Branch must be approved by the Board.
- A preliminary meeting must take place with at least 15 (potential) members who wish to form a new Branch.
- The appropriate Area Secretary or representative of the Area Executive should be invited to attend the preliminary meeting to provide guidance and support.
- The meeting should go through the RBLS Constitution and Branch Handbook to ensure those present understand the undertaking and purpose of the Branch.
- Branch Committee roles and responsibilities should be discussed in detail to ensure the appropriate individuals can be identified to form a Branch Committee.
- All new Branches formed will automatically take the same charity number as RBLS, SCIO003323 and be part of the RBLS SCIO.
- On conclusion of the preliminary meeting the Area Executive should confirm to the National Board of Trustees (via the CEO) they wish to go ahead with the formation of a new Branch.
- Once approval has been granted by the National Board of Trustees, a second meeting should take place with those who are to become members of the new Branch and the Area Executive, to ensure a Branch Committee is formed without delay.
- Support for the newly formed Branch Committee will be provided by the Area Executive and Head Office.
- The new Branch will be listed on the RBLS website and central database to ensure they are included in all communications and can be located on the website search.
- All newly formed Branch Committees should complete an LA1 form which can be provided by Head Office to confirm their new Office Bearers.

1.4.2 Managing your Branch

Clause 11 of the Constitution confirms the conditions under which all Branches must conduct their business. The Constitution as the governing document, supersedes all other documents, but this Handbook should be a useful guide for the day-to-day running of the Branch.

1.4.3 Branch Committee/Management Committee (Branch Office Bearers)

Branch Office Bearers are representatives of RBLS in their area. They are normally elected at the Branch AGM by the members and take office from the close of the appropriate AGM.

Each branch will appoint a Committee, known as the Branch Committee, whose duty is to exercise a controlling oversight over the affairs of the Branch and to carry out the directions of Branch members, Area, NBT and Head Office.

The Branch Committee should consist of:

- President
- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer

Other Office Bearers may be appointed as considered necessary for the efficient running of the Branch. Ideally, each role should be filled by a different elected person, but where this is not possible an elected person may fulfil more than one role, provided it is agreed by the members and is in the best interest of the Branch.

A Branch Committee must have a minimum of three members.

There are no restrictions on who can hold an Office Bearer post within a Branch other than they must be a paid-up member, of good standing and not disqualified from being a Trustee of RBLS (see Section on Fit and Proper Persons, page 21-22).

You do not usually have to have any specific qualifications to be a Committee Member. However, the best Committees are those that have a good mix of a range of skills.

Elected Office Bearers in a Branch have a collective duty to uphold the aims and objectives of RBLS and to support one another in the day-to-day running of the Branch.

All Office Bearers on the Branch Committee should communicate with one another regularly either in person, via email or telephone.

1.4.4 Legion Emails for Office Bearers

All Office Bearers **must** have access to a working email to ensure they can conduct Branch business effectively and for ease of communication with each other, Area and Head Office. Use of a Legion email address is recommended to ensure Legion business conducted for the Branch is carried out on a secure email and not on personal or shared emails.

If an email address is required for your Branch or Branch Office Bearers, you can contact Head Office by emailing info@legionscotland.org.uk and a Legion email account can be set up for any of the Branch Committee or single email for the Branch.

The email accounts are set up with a Microsoft 365 Business Basic Licence, which gives you access to web versions of all the usual Microsoft 365 applications (Word, Excel etc.), the email sits on the RBLS domain and is monitored and owned by RBLS on our secure network. You can also access OneDrive online.

You are responsible for the correct management and use of all Legion emails created and should be mindful of good practice when using the Legion email account.

The email should not be used for personal purposes or the sharing or download of inappropriate material. It should be used exclusively for Branch and RBLS business.

IT issues with accessing the email account, resetting passwords, changing usernames and general email trouble shooting should be reported to Head Office on info@legionscotland.org.uk. Where possible a member of staff will aim to resolve the issue for you. If this is not possible, or if the IT problem is more complex, the issue(s) will be reported to our IT contractor, Razorblue. They provide support for Legion emails for all users.

Please note this support contract does not extend to them fixing local IT issues you may encounter on your laptop/computer. All machines and equipment used locally are the responsibility of the user.

1.4.5 Good Practice

Office Bearers play a key role in representing the charity and conducting its business. When using email for charity matters, it is important that communication is professional, secure and consistent with the charity's governance standards.

Emails sent on behalf of the charity should always:

- Be courteous, respectful and professional in tone
- Reflect the values and reputation of the organisation
- Be clear, concise and relevant to the business of the charity

Office Bearers should remember that emails may be shared, forwarded or disclosed if required.

Where available, Office Bearers should use their official charity email accounts rather than personal addresses when conducting charity business.

This helps to:

- Maintain transparency and accountability
- Ensure continuity if roles change
- Protect important records of charity business

Emails may contain personal data and must be handled responsibly in accordance with UK data protection legislation and guidance from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

Office Bearers should:

- Only share personal information where necessary
- Double-check recipients before sending emails
- Use "bcc" when sending group emails to protect addresses
- Avoid storing sensitive information unnecessarily

Office Bearers should remain alert to potential risks when using email, including:

- Phishing or suspicious messages
- Requests for financial information or payments
- Unexpected attachments or links

If in doubt, verify the request through another method before responding.

Email is a valuable tool for communication, but it should always be used in a way that protects the charity's reputation, confidentiality and governance standards. Office Bearers should exercise care, professionalism and good judgement in all electronic communications relating to the charity.

All Office Bearers should ensure that a professional email signature block is included for all electronic correspondence. Guidance on this is provided in the Brand Guidelines page 39 and 40. If you are currently using a different format or logos other than that noted in the Brand Guidelines these should be changed as soon as possible.

Office Bearers should also ensure that all contact information provided in an email signature is correct and emails or phone numbers for others should not be included in a signature block.

1.5 Why Become a Committee Member?

The personal benefits and rewards in volunteering to run a Branch are wide-ranging. Serving on a Branch Committee gives you the opportunity to be part of the Legion family and instrumental in shaping the Legion presence in your local community.

It is a wonderful way to meet people and to help support the Armed Forces community in your Area.

As an Office Bearer and Trustee, you also have a voice when it comes to the decision-making process of the organisation and you serve as a conduit for information between Head Office, your Area and your members.

Serving on a Committee also gives you the opportunity to share your knowledge and experience with like-minded, dedicated people for a good cause.

It is not always easy, becoming a Committee member comes with great responsibility, there are legal and governance requirements, paperwork and accounts to complete annually and you need to ensure the Branch has enough money to function effectively.

It can be hard to please all your members all the time and often you must deal with complaints and frustrations both within your Committee and across your membership.

If you are elected to a Committee role this should not be taken lightly, your election signifies that the other members trust you to faithfully and diligently perform the task of the steering the Branch for the duration of your time on the Committee.

The information that follows sets out the key responsibilities for each of the Committee roles which should help all Branches and members in determining the best people for these roles.

1.5.1 President

The President has both a representational and encouraging function.

A President should be able to 'open doors', establish useful contacts and bring influence to bear in promoting the best interests of RBLS within the local community.

The President should be prepared to chair important branch events and if necessary, chair the Committee meetings if the Chair or Vice Chair are not available. The President may be called upon to act as mediator in any dispute which may arise between Branch Office Bearers. The President is also expected to act as host to VIPs and use their influence within the community for the benefit of the branch and RBLS.

Key Responsibilities:

- To give clear, constructive and comprehensive encouragement to the Branch Committee when required.
- To preside over the opening of the Branch AGM and give the Presidential address/update.

- Assist the Branch Committee with hosting local dignitaries at Branch events.
- Present Branch awards.
- Represent RBLS in the local community.
- If required by the Branch Committee, discuss suitable successors for the role of Branch President.

A suitable candidate for Branch President should have a deep interest in the local community and RBLS, be comfortable with being "the face" of the Branch and able to counsel the Branch Office Bearers in the execution of their duties.

1.5.2 Chair

The Chair is the Branch chief executive and is responsible for ensuring the Branch is properly administered in accordance with the Constitution and Branch Handbook.

The Chair should have a good working knowledge of the RBLS Constitution and Branch Handbook, to ensure they can perform their duties effectively and they may act as host to VIPs in the absence of the Branch President.

Key Responsibilities:

- Chair meetings effectively and encourage participation from all members.
- To facilitate positive and meaningful dialogue and discussion at meetings and ensure that dominant individuals do not impose on the proceedings or cause disputes.
- To ensure that all Branch Office Bearers are aware of their duties and responsibilities and to provide support and guidance where appropriate.
- To delegate duties to the other Office Bearers and ensure these duties are performed effectively and in accordance with the RBLS Constitution and Branch Handbook.
- To ensure and oversee proper handover takes place between newly elected Office Bearers and their predecessors. This includes ensuring that all minute books, correspondence, publications and Branch papers are handed over to the appropriate person(s).
- Ensure the Branch Treasurer provides a regular update and account of the Branch finances at all Branch Committee meetings and that the Treasurer carries out the appropriate annual audit/examination of Branch accounts.
- Ensure the Branch Secretary is keeping up to date with Head Office and Area communications and sharing these with the rest of the Branch Committee.
- The Chair should also hold the Branch Secretary accountable to ensure preparation of all paperwork, agendas, calling notices etc are issued to the members as required.
- The Chair should be regularly communicating with the Branch Secretary to ensure the day-to-day administration of the Branch is up to date and to identify where additional support or guidance may be required.

- The Chair should also attend or encourage a member of the Branch Committee to attend the Area AGM and Annual Conference to ensure their Branch is represented.

A suitable candidate for Branch Chair should have the ability to lead the Branch and have strong leadership skills and diplomacy. They should have a good working knowledge of the RBLS Constitution and all internal processes for good Branch administration. They should be able to steer and support the other Branch Office Bearers and have the skills to run meetings well and manage any disputes or disagreements.

1.5.3 Vice Chair

The Vice Chair deputises for the Chair and should understand the duties of the Chair so they can fill in effectively when required.

The Vice Chair should also have a good working knowledge of the RBLS Constitution to ensure they can perform their duties effectively.

Key responsibilities:

- To deputise for the Chair in their absence.
- To attend all Branch meetings and be conversant with on-going issues and changes with RBLS, especially at Branch level.
- To hand effectively and efficiently and tasks given to them by the Chair.

A suitable candidate for Vice Chair should have a willingness to support the Branch Chair and to be able to lead the Branch in their absence. They should have a good working knowledge of the RBLS Constitution and all internal processes for good Branch administration

1.5.4 Secretary

The Branch Secretary is responsible to the Branch Chair and the Branch Committee for the efficient management of all Branch administration.

The Secretary MUST have a working email address (preferably a Legion Scotland one) as this will be essential to sending and receiving required correspondence and important documentation, especially from Area and Head Office.

The Secretary will be responsible for organising Branch Committee meetings, the Branch AGM and other Branch meetings throughout the year. This includes creation of an appropriate agenda, minutes from any previous meetings and associated paperwork which will aid the smooth running of any meeting.

Key Responsibilities:

- To be the point of contact for receipt of communications from Area, Head Office and NBT and to ensure all correspondence received is communicated to the rest of the Branch Committee and membership as appropriate.

- To liaise with the Branch Chair in the preparation of all paperwork for meetings of the Branch Committee and Branch membership.
- To attend and record minutes of all meetings, ensuring minutes taken are completed and circulate as appropriate in a timely manner post meeting for approval.
- To safeguard all Branch papers and documents, especially legal documents such as title deeds, insurance policies etc.
- To manage and maintain the Branch membership list, keeping all entries current and liaising as required with Head Office on updates and amendments.
- To ensure all new membership applications are processed in a timely manner in accordance with the RBLS process and to distribute membership paperwork to the members as required annually.
- To ensure the annual Branch LA1 from is completed and submitted to Head Office within the required deadline, and to provide updates through the year or any changes to those holding Office Bearer positions.
- To ensure all other administrative returns, such as the Licence Agreement etc., are completed by the Branch Committee and returned as required.
- Must have a good working knowledge of all guidance and support documents provided for Branch Office Bearers from Head Office on the website, through direct correspondence and in the Head Office Month End Report.

A suitable candidate for Branch Secretary should have a good working knowledge of the RBSL Constitution and internal processes. They should be IT literate, organised and methodical, able to take good minutes, keep accurate records and to manage the day-to-day administration of the Branch.

1.5.5 Treasurer

The Branch Treasurer is responsible for administering the financial management of the Branch, ensuring the Chair and all other Office Bearers are aware of the financial status of the Branch at all times.

When the Branch Committee is making financial decisions for the Branch the Treasurer should be professional and impartial and guide the Committee on the right decisions for the best interests of the Branch as whole. The Treasurer must not act autonomously and make financial decisions in isolation; they should be open and transparent with all Committee members on any financial matters for the Branch.

They must ensure that the Branch complies with Charity Law and with the requirements of the Charity Commission/OSCR as regulator. They must ensure the Branch does not breach any of the requirements or rules set out in the RBLS Constitution or Handbook.

The Treasurer must act with integrity and avoid any personal conflict of interest or misuse of Branch funds or assets. They must ensure that funds are spent or earmarked for the purposes for which they were raised and avoid undertaking activities that might place the Branch funds, assets or reputation at undue risk.

Key Responsibilities:

- To be responsible to the Committee for all the financial affairs of the branch, including the annual accounts, bank accounts, investments, membership subscriptions, insurance premiums etc.
- To attend and produce reports for Branch Committee and general Branch meetings, as requested by the Chair or as the Treasurer deems appropriate.
- To control all monetary transactions for day-to-day Branch business, including safeguarding of receipts and invoices, record keeping, and relevant accounting documents.
- To ensure the Branch accounts are prepared and audited/examined annually so they can present them in a clear and intelligible way at the Branch AGM.
- To submit to Head Office Accounts Department after the Branch AGM, the audited/examined Branch accounts as approved by the members.
- To ensure the Branch pay all invoices from Head Office or external parties on time. Where cheques are used these should be completed with the correct charity information and signed by at least two authorised signatories.
- To ensure the Branch has an agreed cash handling policy which details petty cash limits, how cash should be securely stored once received and timeline and process for banking cash or any other income.

A suitable candidate for Branch Treasurer must have knowledge and experience of current financial practices, bookkeeping and financial management. The must be IT literate with good financial analysis skills and able to write and present financial reports.

1.6 Branch Committee Collective Responsibilities

This Handbook provides an overview of the key responsibilities for each of the roles within a Branch. However, the roles are not mutually exclusive, and the successful running of a Branch relies of ALL the Branch Office Bearers carrying out their duties correctly and being open and transparent with one another.

No Branch Committee should allow an individual Office Bearer to control the activity or financial management of a Branch.

Decisions for the good of the Branch should be made at Branch Committee meetings after the required discussions, deliberation and a vote. All decisions of the Branch Committee should be clearly minuted by the Branch Secretary at all meetings, so the Office Bearers have a record to fall back on if required. Any Office Bearer who goes against the confirmed vote of the Branch Committee may be subject to disciplinary measures as per the Constitution and the Branch Handbook.

1.6.1 Definition of a Trustee and Fit and Proper Persons

All Office Bearers within RBLS are considered Trustees of the organisation, this includes Branch/Club Committee members.

It is important that anyone acting as a Trustee of RBLS is willing to do so, is not disqualified by law from acting in such a role, have declared any interests that might conflict with their Trustee duties, and they understand the role and the responsibilities that come with it.

You can access the HMRC guidance on fit and proper persons here - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-fit-and-proper-persons-test/guidance-on-the-fit-and-proper-persons-test

and a pdf of the help sheet and declaration here https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7f34df40f0b62305b85bc4/Fit-and-proper-persons-helpsheet-and-declaration.pdf

It is good practice to ensure all Office Bearers in your Branch have signed a Declaration of Eligibility which confirms the following:

- They are willing to act as a Trustee of RBLS
- They are capable of managing and administering their own affairs
- They are aware of their duties and responsibilities as a Trustee in terms of section 66 of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 ("the 2005 Act") - https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/10/section/66
- They understand the purposes of RBLS
- They have received a copy of the SCIO Constitution which governs RBLS, and they agree to comply by the rules set out in the Constitution and Branch Handbook.
- They are not disqualified or otherwise prevented from acting as a Trustee

Disqualification under the 2005 Act includes individuals who have:

- undischarged bankruptcy
- granted a Protected Trust Deed
- an unspent conviction for an offence involving dishonesty
- an unspent conviction for an offence under the 2005 Act
- been removed by the Court of Session under the 2005 Act (or earlier legislation) from being a charity Trustee
- been disqualified from being a company director

When members or Office Bearers are nominating and electing individuals to Trustee roles within RBLS they should consider the experience, suitability and appropriateness of the person to assume the role in question if they are successfully elected.

1.7 What do Committees do?

The Committee has an important role in the life of the Branch. You are there to provide leadership and must ensure the Branch finances are sound, operations are legal and your procedures work.

There are several broad tasks that all Committees are responsible for:

1.7.1 Legal Accountability

The Committee must ensure the Branch is meeting all its legal requirements as a charity and remains accountable to government authorities. Members of the Committee need to ensure compliance, integrity and financial solvency.

You must ensure the Branch adheres to the purpose and principles of Royal British Legion Scotland, that the Constitution is followed, business is conducted honestly, and you have proper record keeping.

The key governing body for our organisation is the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

This is your key source of charity information, and all Committee members should be familiar with their website https://www.oscr.org.uk/

1.7.2 Financial Obligations

The Branch Committee accept the obligation to look after the Branches finances. Any Branch, big or small, needs to have a good understanding of its financial duties and take them seriously.

Although the Branch accounts will be prepared by the Branch Treasurer the Committee have a collective responsibility to ensure the finance records are kept up to date and are an accurate account of the income, expenditure and assets of the Branch. You will find further guidance on the annual accounts process in the Accounts section on pages 41-43.

1.7.3 Strategy & Objectives

All members of the Committee should be familiar with the strategy and vision for the organisation and be able to communicate this clearly to their members. An update on the strategy is provided to all Branch Office Bearers annually in the Branch Mailing, with interim updates provided throughout the year. A copy of the current strategy can be requested from Head Office at any time.

1.7.4 RBLS Representation

The Committee is the primary link between the Branch and the veteran's community it supports. It represents the interests of RBLS to its members, potential members and the broader community. All Committee members should be familiar with the activity of their

Branch and able to explain the purposes of RBLS to build public awareness and reach new and broader audiences.

This may involve speaking at events, attending schools and other community events and may also involve speaking with local media.

1.7.5 Committee Evaluation

Branch Committees need to regularly evaluate themselves to ensure they remain representative, responsive and effective.

An evaluation encourages all Committee members to reflect on what the Committee has accomplished, as well as on what it should be doing and how it works. Being a Committee member is often hard work and a thankless job, so regular evaluation helps with identifying strengths and weaknesses and is a good foundation to build positive change.

1.7.6 Keeping Records

Record keeping is the process and system of maintaining Branch documents so that such records can be found quickly and easily.

Records can come in many forms, paper or electronic communications, documents or files, plans, photographs, drawings, handwritten notes and receipts for example.

The Committee are responsible for the safekeeping and good management of all records pertaining to the Branch. It is common for records to be kept and controlled by the Branch Secretary, with assistance from other Committee members.

While the Committee are responsible for all records, they do not personally own them, they are the property of the Branch and all Committee members on leaving their role must entrust all records to the safekeeping of the remaining Committee members.

1.7.7 General Good Practice

- All Committee members are accountable to the Branch members; it is your responsibility to carry out any direction given by your members as well as the Area Council and National Board of Trustees.
- You should be aware of your duties and responsibilities and ask for training and support from your Area or Head Office if anything is unclear.
- You must always act in the best interest of the Branch and ensure that all Branch activity and expenditure is in line with the charitable purposes and principles of RBLS.
- You must have a copy of the current Constitution and supporting documents and be familiar with their content. You can always ask Head Office for a copy if you require one.
- You must retain all Branch administration documents, memberships and membership details securely for the use of the Branch. RBLS information, and personal information on members should not be shared outside the organisation and should only be used for Branch administration or membership purposes.
- No individual Office Bearer owns this information. When an Office Bearer leaves their post, they must relinquish all documents, paper, electronic and otherwise, to the remaining members of the Branch Committee. This includes any electronic equipment (such as mobile phones or laptops) if they are the property of the Branch and confirming passwords to access electronic or online information pertaining to the Branch.
- A Branch Committee must ensure that when an Office Bearer leaves all passwords to access Branch documents and membership information are changed and updated to keep records secure.
- Where possible an Office Bearer leaving a Branch Committee should do a handover with their replacement to allow for a smooth transition and training of the new person in post or provide a full handover document to allow for the transfer of knowledge and information.

1.8 Branch Committee vs Club Committee

Having separate Committees for a charity Branch and an affiliated Club is considered good practice because it helps maintain clear governance, legal compliance, and accountability.

Separate Committees help ensure:

- The Branch Committee manages charitable activities and funds.
- The Club Committee manages social or fundraising activities for members.

This prevents confusion over who is legally responsible for decisions.

If a Club and Branch share the same Committee, there is a risk of:

- Charity money being used for social or member benefits
- Poor financial oversight
- Blurred accountability

Separate Committees help ensure charitable funds are controlled by those responsible for the charity.

Having separate Committees also helps avoid any conflicts of interest as the Club priorities (social activities, member benefits etc.) may differ from the charity's charitable objectives. Separate Committees allow for the Branch Office bearers to focus on the charity's mission and the Club Office Bearers to focus on member engagement.

Separate Committees allows for better governance and transparency on who makes the decisions, who controls the finances and who is accountable to the charity.

It can be difficult to find sufficient local volunteers to ensure two separate Committees are created, so RBLS is mindful that it is the case for some Branches and Clubs where a single Committee has oversight of both.

If this cannot be avoided, then it is important to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, and all Office Bearers understand the difference between their Branch Office Bearer role and Club Office Bearer role.

The financial affairs of the Branch and Club must be kept separate, including banking, financial controls and annual accounts and reporting.

Where a single Committee exists, it is also likely that the AGM for both Branch and Club often take place on the same date. If this is the case, you must ensure that a separate agenda is issued for each meeting and there is a clear break between the conclusion of Branch business and conducting Club business.

1.9 Branch Meetings

The Branch Committee/Management Committee should meet regularly, at least twice a year as per the Constitution.

As the size of RBLS Branches vary greatly there is no set number of members required to ensure all meetings are quorate, but as a rule of thumb and good governance, you should aim to have a third of your members represented if possible.

All members should receive advance notification of any meetings taking place, normally 14 workings days, to allow for maximum attendance and circulation of information.

When contacting your members the following is good practice:

- Confirm the purpose of the meeting
- Date, time and location
- Provide an agenda for all business to be covered
- Provide any necessary documents pertaining to business to be addressed
- Confirm if any items on the agenda require a vote and ensure your members have been provided with all relevant information to be able to make an informed decision and vote on the day
- If it is a regular Branch meeting, you should also provide the minutes from the last meeting so they can be approved

If the Branch has need to call a Special or Emergency meeting, the same advance notification period applies (14 working days), and all members should be contacted and provided with the required information to ensure they know a meeting is taking place, its purpose, and the business which needs to be dealt with on the day.

The Branch Secretary is responsible for taking minutes for each meeting to ensure the Committee have a record of all business discussed, decisions taken and how members have voted if a vote was required on any matters. If the Secretary is unable to attend, the Committee must appoint someone in their place to record the minutes for the meeting.

Minutes should be written up as soon as possible after all meetings for the purpose of accurate record keeping and made available to the members on request. It is also considered good practice for the Branch to share minutes with their Area Executive Committee (and Head Office on request).

Minutes may be saved and recorded either on paper or electronically.

1.9.1 Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Branch is open to all current (i.e., paid-up) members.

- The AGM must be held by the 21st of January
- 14 workings days' notice to be given to all members
- Agenda for the meeting provided in advance with any associated documents
- Minutes from the previous AGM must be provided
- Annual Reports should be presented on behalf of the Branch from the Committee. This must include a full report from the Treasurer and Secretary
- Financial statements for the previous financial year (ended 31st of October) must be circulated in advance so they can be received and adopted at the meeting

If Office Bearers roles are up for nomination this should be communicated to all members well in advance, so details of the nominees can be circulated (if possible) with the AGM calling notice. This allows all members plenty of time to consider who had been nominated for a position on their Committee and the suitability of each candidate, so a meaningful vote can take place at the meeting.

Election of Office Bearers normally takes place at the AGM. The voting method for the election of Office Bearers is decided by the Committee but the process must be fair and transparent, and you are advised to take a roll call for all members eligible to vote at the meeting.

The process of electing new Office Bearers should be controlled by the person who chairs the meeting, this includes a clear explanation of how voting will take place and who the nominees are.

Successful nominees for Office Bearer roles should be confirmed at the meeting and noted in the meeting minutes. The Committee can then use the LA1 form to confirm all current Office Bearer details to Head Office as soon as possible after the AGM.

1.9.2 Informal Meetings

If your meeting lacks a quorum, in these circumstances rather than abandon the proceedings completely, it may be better to hold an informal meeting. Such a meeting would have no Constitutional standing, and its decisions would need to be ratified later at a formal meeting to become valid.

Normal meeting procedure should be observed to aid efficiency.

1.9.3 Conduct at Meetings

All members are expected to show respect to one another at all meetings. All members have the right to speak and can do so through the meeting Chair. The Chair controls the flow and order of the meeting and will call upon members, in order, to address the meeting as required.

Where there is a difference of opinion or debate on any business to be discussed, the discourse should be professional and respectful, disorderly conduct will not be tolerated.

Disorderly conduct can be described as, any member that persistently and wilfully obstructs the business of any meeting, uses objectionable words, disregards the authority of the Chair, is verbally or physically abusive to other members and refuses to conform to the required Standing Orders or meeting protocol.

It is at the discretion of the Chair to determine if a member is displaying disorderly conduct and the member will be provided the opportunity to make an explanation or apology for their behaviour. The Chair has the right to move to confirm the member be suspended for the sitting of the meeting if they fail to explain or apologise.

1.10 Branch Closures (mergers and sub-Branches)

The closure of a Branch should not be taken lightly and only considered if no other viable options are available. A Branch wishing to close should inform their Area Executive of this consideration before starting closure procedures.

Areas should provide support to any Branch which is struggling to recruit sufficient Office Bearers or to retain members to determine of closure can be avoided.

If despite Area support a Branch still must consider closure, the Area should communicate this to the National Board of Trustees (via the CEO). Once the Trustees approve the closure this will be communicated to the Area Executive who will then support the Branch through the closure process as per Clauses 11.11 – 11.14 in the Constitution.

A Branch may only close by a resolution passed by a majority of its members present, entitled to vote and voting at the SGM/EGM called to discuss the consideration of closure. All members should be given 4 weeks' notice of the SGM/EGM

In some instances, it may be preferable or beneficial if a Branch is struggling to retain members and Office Bearers, and to keep up with Branch administration to consider becoming a sub-Branch or another RBLS Branch or to merge with another RBLS Branch. This is something you can discuss with your Area Executive Committee.

If this option is being considered your Area Executive should help facilitate discussions between your Branch and the Branch in question (which is to be approached to consider a merger or you becoming a sub-Branch) to initiate discussions between the respect Branch Committees. A merger or becoming a sub-Branch must be approved by your Area Executive Committee and have their support. Consultation must also take place with the members of the respective Branches.

If you opt to become a sub-Branch of another local RBLS Branch, you will be required to relinquish your charitable status, but you are entitled to retain your name and Branch standard separate from that of the Branch under which you are governed. Members of your Branch are then treated as members of the Branch of which your sub-Branch forms a part of and are entitled to vote as such.

The Constitution adopted 23rd May 2025 now allows for Areas to consider the creation of a Super Branch if this is deemed necessary. A Super Branch allows for the amalgamation of multiple smaller Branches or Branches that are struggling within that Area so the members can remain as part of the RBLS SCIO. Any Area considering the formation of a Super Branch must first seek consent from the National Board of Trustees.

2. Membership

The Royal British Legion Scotland is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) as of 2016. **All** members of RBLS Branches are members of the SCIO irrespective of the Branch status and whether the Branch has opted to join the SCIO.

All membership details are held securely at Head Office on the Netsuite Database. This information is populated from the membership details submitted from the Branch via membership forms, direct debit forms, and in some instances, spreadsheets generated from the Branch.

The Branch is responsible for keeping their membership information up to date throughout the year and noting any changes to Head Office.

2.1 Membership year

The membership year currently runs from the 1st of November to the 31st of October.

In October each year all Branches receive their membership packs from Head Office.

The pack is sent to the preferred contact for the Branch. Head Office contact every Branch prior to October to confirm who the best contact is for each Branch.

The packs normally contain the following:

- Personalised letter and sticker for all renewing members
- Full spreadsheet of all member details (including confirmation of who pays by direct debit and who are signed up to Gift Aid)
- Membership joining forms
- Membership leaflets to use at events
- Direct debit forms
- Temporary membership cards
- Full instructions on the membership process

This pack provides the Branch with everything they need to process memberships for returning and new members.

Branches are encouraged to contact their members ahead of the 1st of November to invite them to renew at the start of the membership year. Each Branch will have its own process for how best to carry out the renewals but starting early helps with efficient administration and cashflow for the Branch.

The Office Bearer(s) responsible for membership at the Branch should:

- Ensure members renew as soon as possible when the membership year starts
- Only provide members with their personalised letter and renewal sticker when they have paid their fee

- Ensure all members receive the full letter which is provided, the letter should not be removed or tampered with as it contains useful information
- Encourage those not signed up to Gift Aid to do so if they are eligible
- Highlight direct debit as an efficient means to pay the membership fee annually
- Update your branches membership information ensuring all new members are accounted for and ensuring all current paid-up members details i.e. address, contact details & Gift Aid information are up to date. Any amendments/changes should be communicated to Head Office as soon as possible so the membership database can be updated accordingly
- An up-to-date membership list for your branch can be requested from Head Office at any time (this will be supplied in the form of an Excel spreadsheet)

For new members joining the branch, the Office Bearer(s) responsible for membership at the Branch should:

- Ensure the new member completes a membership form in full. If they wish to pay by direct debit, the direct debit form must also be fully completed, and bank details must be provided
- Provide the member with a temporary membership card to use whilst they wait for confirmation of their new membership number and until their permanent membership plastic card is printed
- Send the completed membership form (and any associated documents) to Head Office without delay, this can be done electronically by scanning the form and emailing membership@legionscotland.org.uk or it can be posted to RBLS, New Haig House, Logie Green Road, Edinburgh EH7 4HQ

New members are added to the database as Head Office receives the information. There are six additional membership runs throughout the year to produce new and replacement membership cards.

As new members join throughout the year Head Office will send the letter and membership cards to the Branch to issue to the member. New cards should not be handed out until payment is received from the member.

For those members who pay by direct debit, their letter and renewal sticker/membership card are issued directly from Head Office to the individual once confirmation of their membership payment has gone through.

If a member loses their card throughout the year, the branch can notify Head Office so a replacement can be ordered. The cost of re issuing the card is £2.50 which is invoiced to the Branch.

2.2 Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Ensure the membership pack and all information is checked and instructions understood when it is issued in October
- Contact your members early to ensure they are ready to renew from the 1st of November
- Ensure you encourage members to check their information is correct and to sign up for Gift Aid if they are eligible
- Branches should note that the following membership years renewal envelopes are ordered several weeks prior to the packs being received by the branch. All address changes received during this period will not be amended on the physical membership renewal but will have been amended on the membership database
- Keep a record of all members who have renewed and new members who join throughout the membership year
- Update Head Office when there are changes to the Branches membership information, e.g., when a member passes away, moves branch or changes address and/or contact information
- Contact Head Office if you need any assistance or additional information

Don't

- Remove or tamper with the renewal letter provided for your members
- Delay in getting started with your renewals for the membership year
- Allow required amendments to the branches membership information to build up over a long period of time without actioning/informing Head Office of any the amendments that need to be actioned
- Retain multiple membership/joining forms for long periods of time, these should be sent to Head Office as soon as they are completed
- Create your own joining form, you must use the leaflets or joining forms provided by Head Office
- Get overwhelmed, if it feels a lot to keep track of you can contact Head Office for support at any time

2.3 Invoices & Credits

Invoices are issued to each Branch before the end of December; this includes all memberships distributed in October and the 1st and 2nd card runs that follow. Throughout the membership year subsequent invoices are issued on a 2-3 month basis, for all additional new memberships, renewals and replacement cards.

Where replacement cards have been invoiced, the Branch should collect this fee from the member before requesting/issuing them the replacement card.

We offer a free replacement card for any name changes, spelling errors on the card, card quality issues or for any cards that have been stolen.

All invoices note the total number of membership fees due, which are currently charged at £20 per member (excluding Life members who are not charged for a membership fee). Post & Packaging charges for sending the October membership packs and subsequent card runs are included.

Please note that Branches are not invoiced for members who pay by direct debit as those are collected directly by our bank. If a Branch is invoiced for a member who then pays by direct debit during the membership year this will be credited to the Branch.

The Membership Fees due must be paid by the Branch to RBLS no later than 28 days after the Branch has received their invoice. It is important that Branches pay invoices on time and do not wait until returning unsold memberships for credit before any payments are made.

As per the Constitution if your Branch is left with any memberships which were not paid for, i.e., individuals who did not renew after the 1st of November, these **must** be returned to Head Office by the 31st of July for a credit/refund. Unsold memberships returned after this date will not be processed as per the Constitution.

You should only return memberships when you are sure the member is not going to renew, do not return memberships in bulk too early in the membership year, you should allow every member the maximum chance to renew.

You should only return memberships for a credit that are valid within the current membership year. Any memberships returned from previous membership year's will not be credited.

Determining the validity of all credit requests is a lengthy process, requiring a check of each membership returned to ensure the Branch is eligible for a refund. This includes checking if the member was invoiced for earlier in the year, if they have paid by direct debit and if they received a replacement renewal sticker or card during the year.

Branches should check each membership before it is returned to determine if you are eligible for a valid refund.

All refunds due to Branches after the unsold memberships have been processed will be transferred into Branch bank account.

2.4 Direct Debit

Direct debit is an efficient way for members to pay their annual fee, the form only needs to be completed once, and the annual payment is collected to keep their membership active. It also means less administration for the Branch as the renewals are sent directly from Head Office. The more members that pay by direct debit the fewer members the Branch must chase annually for their membership fee payments.

Direct debit is accessible and easy, especially for those members who cannot attend meetings in person to pay their membership fee.

Direct Debit is also one of the safest and most reassuring ways of paying your bills and membership fees:

Payments are made automatically, and the Direct Debit Guarantee protects you and your money.

The direct debit guarantee includes:

- An immediate money back guarantee from your bank in the event of an error in the payment of your Direct Debit
- Advance notice if the date or amount changes
- The right to cancel at any time

Members can set up a direct debit at any time throughout the year; it does not have to be done prior to the 1st of November.

Branches can supply the member with a direct debit form (copies of which are provided in the October membership packs) or a direct debit form can be downloaded from the website. Head Office can also supply additional forms on request.

Forms must be completed in full, including the following information:

- Name
- Address
- Bank Details
- Email
- Branch they are joining/a member of
- Gift Aid Declaration – if eligible

Members can also use the direct debit form to confirm if they wish to donate to RBLS or to their Branch, including the donation amount and frequency.

We strongly recommend that Branch Office Bearers encourage their members to adopt Direct Debit as a method of payment to help with Branch administration.

How it works

All Branches are contacted in September to provide confirmation of the membership fee they plan to charge for the upcoming membership year (including any Branch or Club fees in addition to the £20). This ensures the correct amount is collected on the 1st of November for your members.

At the beginning of each membership year all active direct debits are collected on the 1st of November. Once successful direct debit collections are confirmed to Head Office, those members receive their renewal sticker/membership card directly from

Head Office. All those members denoted as paying by direct debit are not included in the October packs sent directly to Branches.

Throughout the membership year direct debits are collected on the 1st or 15th of the month.

Members are notified 10 days before the collection date by letter or email (if it has been supplied). The letter/email confirms the amount, date and confirmation of bank details supplied.

After each collection date, the Branch will receive a list of direct debit paying members, detailing their membership number and the amount that was collected, so you can update your records locally.

RBLS retains £20 of the membership fee collected. If a Branch or Club fee has been confirmed in September and collected, this is then paid directly to the Branch bank account. The same process is applied for any Branch donations. All payments are made through our Bankline service with Royal Bank of Scotland.

It is important for your Branch to confirm to Head Office if your bank details change during the membership year, as this avoids any issues or delays in payment to the Branch.

Further Assistance

Please let us know if you would like us to assist in helping you get more members signing up for Direct Debit. We can help with mailings to members before the membership year starts so that the direct debit is set up prior to 1st November, all we ask is for branches to pay for the cost of the mailing and we will do the rest. You can email membership@legionscotland.org.uk for support.

2.5 Gift Aid

Gift Aid is an important part of the annual income for RBLS. Through the scheme charities can claim an extra 25p for every £1 donated, at no extra cost to the donor. This includes the annual membership fee. For every member signed up to Gift Aid RBLS can claim an additional £5.

Members can sign up to Gift Aid at any time by making a declaration to a charity, provided you are a UK taxpayer and have paid enough Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax to cover the donation amount in that tax year (6 April to 5 April).

Members can sign up to Gift Aid using the return slip on their membership renewal letter, which is provided each year, online on the website or by downloading the Gift Aid form or completing a printed copy of the form which can be provided by Head Office.

We strongly recommend that Branch Office Bearers encourage their members to adopt Direct Debit as a method of payment to help with Branch administration.

2.6 Membership Transfers

Throughout the membership year individuals can and do transfer their membership from one Branch to another. This can be for personal reasons or because they have moved location. If a member wishes to transfer from one RBLS Branch to another they should be supported in this process.

If you are approached by a member who wishes to transfer to your Branch from another RBLS Branch, contact should be made with their current Branch Secretary to confirm they are a current paid-up member and of good standing. Some Branches provide a transfer form which can be signed by the Branch Secretary of both the old and new Branch for the member.

The member should not be asked to pay their membership fee again in the same membership year, as they will have already paid at their original Branch. Their membership fee will not be due with your Branch until the new membership year begins on the 1st of November.

Members also are known to transfer from Royal British Legion to Royal British Legion Scotland, particularly if they have relocated from elsewhere in the UK to Scotland. The process for these transfers is the same and a member from Royal British Legion approaching your Branch to ask to join should be welcomed.

You can verify their status and if they are a paid-up member in the year in question with the Royal British Legion Branch they are moving from. Members who transfer from Royal British Legion to Royal British Legion Scotland are not required to pay a Branch membership fee until the next new membership year starts on the 1st of November.

3. Branch Administration

Throughout the year there are various administration requirements for Branches all of which are important for the day-to-day business of the Branch.

It is important for Branch Committees to understand their responsibilities when it comes to the smooth running of the Branch, when mailings are issued and why, and what needs to be completed and returned to Head Office.

3.1 LA1 Forms

The LA1 forms are issued to all Branches with the membership packs in October, with a second copy sent in the Annual Branch mailing.

This form **must** be completed by each Branch as it is important on multiple levels:

- This is how the Branch confirms to Head Office who their Office Bearers are and their contact information. This ensures that we have a current and correct record of who to contact throughout the year to share key information for the Committee and your members
    - It is also a legal requirement for GDPR to ensure we have confirmed permission to share branch contacts publicly on our site. This also ensures that public branch enquiries are directed to the appropriate member of the committee. Failure to submit this, will result in incorrect contact details and delayed public/membership enquiries
- All Branches can be searched for on our website, a directory if you like, and the LA1 form includes a section where the Branch can complete the details of the contact for the Branch for the online directory
- The LA1 form also has sections which can be completed to confirm the Branch is aware of the Licence Agreement, and who the best point of contact is for invoices and for the Branch in general
- The form is also a way for the Branch to confirm who their nomination(s) are for Area Council and who their delegates will be for Annual Conference

The form should be returned to Head Office (to info@legionscotland.org.uk) by the deadline noted on the form or after the Branch AGM, whichever occurs first, so the details can all be updated on the database. At the end of each month the contact information, Area Council nominations and attendees for Annual Conference are all confirmed back to the Areas so they can also update their records for each Branch.

This information is not shared outside the organisation; it is used internally to ensure efficient communication and administration.

Failure to submit an LA1 form means Head Office will not know if your Office Bearers have changed throughout the year or at your AGM and key information and monthly updates could then be going to the wrong people.

A copy of the LA1 form can be requested at any time from Head Office.

3.2 Licence Agreements

Licence Agreements were first issued to Branches, Clubs and Areas back in 2015. The Licence Agreement is between Royal British Legion Scotland and the Office Bearers (of Branch, Club or Area) with respect to the "Name".

RBLS is the legal and beneficial owner of the Name, the Name is defined as "any trademarks (registered or unregistered), names, logos, copyright or other rights owned or licensed (whether under an express or implied licence) by or on behalf of RBLS or which are associated with RBLS together with any modification of or variation as is notified from time to time by RBLS (at its sole and absolute discretion)…"

RBLS now issues the Licence Agreement every 5 years starting from January 2026. The Agreement details the use of the Name, ownership of the Name, assignment, infringements, termination of the agreement, indemnity and governing law.

The Agreement is signed on behalf of RBLS by the National Chair and CEO and on behalf of the Branch (or Club or Area) by the Office Bearers in post at the time of circulation.

When the Licence Agreement is issued it **must** be signed by all Branches, Clubs and Areas as it is a legal requirement set by the National Board of Trustees.

The completed Licence Agreements once returned to Head Office are scanned and attached to the Branch/Club/Area record for future reference.

A copy of the Licence in place can be requested at any time from Head Office.

3.3 Annual Branch Mailing

At the beginning of each year Head Office creates an administration mailing for Areas and Branches.

This is an ideal way to ensure that key information is circulated to all Office Bearers. The mailing is now digital, another reason why it is vital that all Office Bearers have a working email address and LA1 forms are submitted with current and correct information as this guarantees all those responsible for running Areas and Branches receive this key information.

The annual mailing includes (but is not limited to):

- A copy of the RBLS Strategy
- Blank LA1 form
- Forecast of Events for the year ahead
- Best Kept War Memorial guidelines and entry form
- RBLS Honours nomination guideline and citation form
- All relevant factsheets and updates on topics such as Gift Aid, SCIO, Branch Investments etc.

If there are changes to the Branch Handbook and any Constitutional updates these are also included in the Annual mailing along with any further information Head Office feels is useful for Office Bearers.

This is an important mailing with a lot of information provided and all Office Bearers should be on the lookout for it being circulated each year.

3.4 Annual Conference Mailings

There are two further mailings in the year which are important for all Office Bearers.

Draft Conference packs:

- Issued 8 weeks before Conference
- Circulated to Trustees, Area Secretaries & Branch Secretaries (or preferred contact)
- Containing – draft agenda, confirmation of voting process for the year, motions for the membership vote and any additional information

Final Conference packs:

- Issued 4 weeks before Conference
- Circulated to Trustees, Area Secretaries & Branch Secretaries (or preferred contact) and Branch Delegates
- Containing – final agenda, confirmation of voting process for the year, motions for the membership vote and any additional information

3.5 Membership Mailing in October

As already noted in the Membership section of this Handbook, the next mailing to all Branches is in October each year with the full pack of everything required for the new membership year.

3.6 Interim Communications

In addition to the four main mailings noted above, Head Office issues a monthly digital bulletin to all Office Bearers and members with a working email.

This is normally circulated on the last Friday of the month (or as close to as possible).

The content of the monthly newsletter varies throughout the year to cover topics of current interest, Head Office updates, news and events information and much more.

As this is a digital bulletin it can only be sent to those who have provided a working email address.

3.7 Strategic Updates

Over and above the wealth of information already being circulated to Office Bearers and members there will be interim updates throughout the year from the Strategic Transformation Committee.

3.8 Branch Webinars

Webinars have now been running since 2024. These vary in terms of content and include useful guidance and updates for Branches, Clubs and Areas, presentations from Annual Conference and updates from the Strategic Transformation Committee.

All webinars are recorded and kept on our YouTube channel and the links shared in the monthly newsletters throughout the year.

If your Branch needs to access any current or historic recordings you can contact Head Office at any time.

4. Branch/Area Accounts

4.1 SCIO vs non-SCIO

The SCIO Area/Branch Accounts Financial Year runs from 1st November to 31st October. These Accounts are required to be submitted annually, to Head Office, in early November. The Accounts Manager sends a reminder to all SCIO Areas/Branches, usually in the October, highlighting this requirement.

The non-SCIO Area/Branch Accounts Financial Year also runs from 1st November to 31st October. These Accounts are required to be submitted annually to Head Office by 1st March and to OSCR by 31st July of the following year.

4.2 Audit Requirements

Charity Law in Scotland requires any Charity with an Annual income of over £500K (or assets exceeding £3.26 million) to have their accounts fully Audited. Any charity which does not exceed this threshold, the requirement is to submit an Independent Examiners Reports. You should not be paying for a complex audit each year if below the threshold.

4.3 Preparation of the Annual Accounts

Your Area/Branch accounts should be prepared in advance of the AGM. It is good practice to ensure the draft is circulated to all your members ahead of the meeting so they can review the information and ask questions at the AGM before a vote is taken to confirm if the accounts are approved and accepted.

4.4 How to submit your annual accounts

Once your members have approved and accepted the accounts and you are happy with the final independent report, you can submit the accounts to OSCR online.

To do this you need to have created an online account for your Area/Branch. You can do this by visiting https://www.oscr.org.uk/ Every Area/Branch will already have an online account with OSCR, but it is possible the "registered user" is no longer a Trustee or member. In this case the best way to create a new "registered user" is to contact OSCR on 01382 220446. They will guide you through the process.

When you are ready to submit your accounts your designated Trustee with log in access will be required to sign in OSCR On-Line and to complete the Annual Return. A copy of your accounts and an Independent Examiners Report must also be attached before you submit electronically.

4.5 What support is available from Head Office

Head Office can provide general assistance, advice or guidance regarding accounts and accounts submissions.

The point of contact for this service is **Accounts Support**; this post is currently filled by Alan Hayes. Alan is a retired Army Paymaster, a Fellow of the International Association of Bookkeepers (FIAB) and consequently a qualified Independent Examiner.

Contact details for Alan: a.hayes@legionscotland.org.uk

Accounts Support at Head Office can also provide the Independent Examiners Report (at no cost) for those that need it.

4.6 New Trustee detail requirements

From June 2025 OSCR have now introduced the requirement for all charities to upload to OSCR On-Line details of all Trustees.

Charity trustees, also known as directors or committee members, are legally recognised as the individuals responsible for the control and management of a charity.

Charities will be required to submit the following details for each trustee:

1. Full name
2. Home address
3. Email address
4. Telephone number
5. Date of birth
6. Date of appointment

OSCR will securely store this information for regulatory purposes and to maintain contact with trustees as needed.

From early 2026, the first and last names of each trustee will be published on the Scottish Charity Register, **all other information provided will be for OSCR's internal use only**. Trustees may apply for an exemption from name publication on the Scottish Charity Register in cases where there is a risk to personal safety or security.

You can provide this information by logging in to OSCR On-Line and clicking on the 'Manage your charity trustees' section.

4.7 Contact details for OSCR On-Line assistance:

info@oscr.org.uk

01382 220446

4.8 Good Practice

Your Trustees should ensure all accounts information is held securely, including passwords. The log in details for your OSCR On-line account are confidential and should only be accessible to those Office Bearers in the Branch who require access to the system to manage your accounts submissions.

Any outgoing Office Bearers with financial responsibility within the Area/Branch should ensure that they relinquish all documents and information when they leave the role and where possible should provide a detailed handover for the new Office Bearer.

It is also advisable for the new or remaining Office Bearers to reset any passwords when a post is vacated, to keep the information secure.

5. General Data Protection Rules (GDPR)

It is important to ensure that all Branches are only collecting data as needed for charitable activities, i.e., membership records, Branch events, volunteering etc.

It is important to ensure your members know that their personal data is treated as confidential and stored securely.

5.1 GDPR Expectations for Charity Branches

This guidance should help Branches handle personal data safely and responsibly. It is based on UK data protection requirements including the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

What Branches should do:

Collect only what is necessary

- Only collect personal data needed for branch activities
- Avoid creating unofficial contact lists
- Do not store sensitive personal information unless there is a clear reason

Use secure systems

- Do not store charity data on personal devices or unapproved apps
- Follow organisational guidance on email and file storage

Protect confidentiality

- Treat all personal data as confidential
- Do not discuss personal, complaint, or safeguarding matters in open meetings
- Share personal information only with people who need to know

Be careful with communications

- Check before sending emails containing personal data
- Avoid using open group messages for sharing personal contact details
- Be cautious when forwarding information

Photos, social media and events

- Obtain permission before publishing identifiable photos
- Follow charity guidance for posting event images
- Pay special attention when children or vulnerable people are involved

Know your role limits

- Branches should follow central charity governance and data protection guidance
- Do not make independent decisions about data protection policy
- Ask if you are unsure

5.2 Reporting data problems immediately

You should contact the charity's data protection lead if any of the following happen:

- Personal data is lost or sent to the wrong person
- Devices or files are stolen
- Data is accidentally shared outside the charity

You can report serious data breaches and problems to Head Office by emailing the Data Protection Officer on dpo@legionscotland.org.uk

6. Ceremonial Handbook

RBLS has a Ceremonial Handbook which provides guidance on certain matters of procedure connected with ceremonial activity, parades and services.

The handbook is divided into 6 parts providing information on:

Part 1 - internal RBLS ceremonials at Area and Branch events such as the appointing of Officers, the opening of committee meetings and dress for RBLS occasions.

Part 2 - RBLS Standard, Standard Bearers and Marshals with the object of ensuring uniformity throughout the RBLS.

Part 3 - Standard Bearing drill, parades, procedure and protocol on ceremonial matters.

Part 4 - the running of Standard Bearer competitions, their rules and the organisation of competitions.

Part 5 - general notes on ceremonial for RBLS events and other responsibilities regarding events with RBLS and non RBLS participation.

Part 6 - Orders of Service with suggestions including the Modern suggestion.

This is a lengthy but useful guide for all Branches, particularly if you regularly participate in ceremonial activities. A copy of the full Ceremonial Handbook can be provided by Head Office on request.

The Ceremonial Handbook is reviewed and updated annually.

7. Brand Guidelines

Brand Guidelines are a very important tool for any organisation, RBLS has a detailed set of guidelines which were last updated in August 2025.

Copies of the guidelines can be requested from Head Office at any time.

7.1 Why are Brand Guidelines Important?

Consistency builds trust - Brand guidelines ensure that our logo, colours, fonts, and messaging look and sound the same everywhere — from social media posts to printed materials. Consistency helps our audience recognise and trust our organisation.

They protect our brand identity - Guidelines prevent misuse of our logo or tone, ensuring our brand always looks professional and true to its values. This keeps our reputation strong and credible.

They save time and reduce confusion - When everyone, staff, partners, and volunteers know exactly how to use our brand elements, it avoids endless questions and revisions.

They make our communication more effective - Clear, consistent branding reinforces our message and makes it easier for people to remember who we are and what we stand for.

They help us grow confidently - As our organisation expands, strong brand guidelines make it easier to maintain a unified voice across different teams, locations, or campaigns.

7.2 Key Elements in the Guidelines

There is a lot of information contained in the Brand Guidelines, the information in places is technical and aimed for those who you may commission to create materials for you, such as a local digital print company.

However, there are two key elements in the guidelines that everyone should understand and adopt.

The correct name for our organisation is Royal British Legion Scotland (or Legion Scotland if you wish to use the daily trading name). Under no circumstances should you refer to your Area or Branch as the British Legion, Royal British Legion, Legion in Scotland, RBL Scotland, Poppyscotland or similar versions of these.

The persistent use of variations of our name has resulted in substantial brand confusion over the years and many of the stakeholders and partners we work with not understanding who we are and what we do.

The correct name should be used in email addresses and signatures, all printed materials, including letters and on your social media if you use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.

The correct logo is also important. There have been many variations of the logo over the last 10 years and also instances where the Royal British Legion or Poppyscotland logo have been used.

The Brand Guidelines provides examples of logos no longer in use and the correct logo which is now on brand as of 2025.

The logo file in various formats is available on request from Head Office if you require these to update or create materials.

8. Marketing & PR Guidance

There are many ways that a Branch can ensure they are promoting their activity and raising awareness in the local community.

Local bulletin Board and Club message board (if you have one) are a useful tool to advertise what is on and who is welcome.

You should always ensure that any information on message or bulletin boards is current and accurate and using the correct branding for the organisation.

8.1 Local (and National) Media

You can also work with your local media to build relationships with them and ensure their support for promotion of events you have on throughout the year.

When liaising with media outlets it is important to ensure you provide clear and concise information on what you want them to share, the nature of the event/information and who the target audience is. You must also ensure that you use the correct name for anything going to print, as per the Brand Guidelines that would be Royal British Legion Scotland or Legion Scotland **NOT** the British Legion, British Legion (Scotland), Royal British Legion or Poppyscotland.

Media outlets will often control the word length of an article or imagery required so it is best to establish with them what content they require and why.

Having good stock images which represent your Area/Branch and its activity is also useful if you must react quickly to a media request, you don't want to miss out on some free PR if you can't provide a good photo. You can get more information on "Imagery" in the Brand Guidelines.

You can always ask your media outlet for a review of anything that is to go to print so you can check and verify you are happy with the details.

You may from time to time be approached directly by a media outlet about Legion business (local and/or national), or for comment on an ongoing news story or contentious issue. Careful consideration should be given to any comments made to the press, especially on contentious topics. If in doubt, you can refer to Head Office for guidance and PR support, you do not always have to give comment when approached.

8.2 Facebook

Having a Facebook page for your Area or Branch is also an incredibly useful tool to spread awareness and reach a much wider audience.

Any page set up should use the correct name from the outset, i.e., "Royal British Legion Scotland *Example* Branch/Area".

There are key elements to adopt to run a successful Facebook page:

8.2.1 Clear Purpose & Audience

- Know **why** the page exists - are you raising brand awareness, engaging with your local community, educating others on what you do.
- Consider your audience – is it members only or will the page be public as this will determine a lot of your content.

8.2.2 Strong Profile Setup

- **Profile photo**: this should be the current RBLS logo (you must ensure you use the correct RBLS logo, files can be provided by Head Office on request).
- **Cover photo**: use a strong clear image which represents what we stand for, it could also be an image of your Club if you have one. You should ensure the image is good quality and has the correct aspect ratio, that is, the width and height of the image is suitable for a cover photo. This ensures the image is not stretched, out of focus or you lose some of the visual information.
- **About section**: this is where you include contact information and links to any other social media that you use. It helps your audience see how and when they can get in touch and who you are.

8.2.3 Content

Setting up your page is just the first step; you need to ensure that you can post on the page regularly with content that will engage and grow your audience.

For example:

- **What's on** – you can advertise events and activities which the Area/Branch are running.
- **What has been keeping you busy** – share with your audience what you have been doing and what members have been up to; have you attended a local event or another veterans' event and can share the experience?
- **Useful information** – what can you share that would benefit your audience, key contacts and information for veterans and their families. What support or services do you offer that you want to make your members and wider audience aware of?
- **Interactive posts** – these can be surveys, feedback, opinion polls, competitions, to engage with your audience and get their views.
- **Videos/reels** – it's important to share more than just text. Videos and recordings can gain a lot of interest and are often shared by your audience.
- **Imagery** – a picture can paint a thousand words and good quality photos which reflect your activity or interests will increase your engagement.

8.2.4 Posting Consistency (Not Spam)

- 3–5 posts per week is ideal for most pages.
- Post when your audience is active or most likely to engage (you can check you Insights behind the scenes to access reports that give you this information).
- Keep a recognizable voice and style throughout your posts and don't make the posts too long, short and punchy is best.

8.2.5 Engagement

This is non-negotiable – a successful page which attracts new followers requires you to engage with your audience. This does require monitoring of the page on a regular basis. You may wish to designate this responsibility to one of your Office Bearers or a volunteer with social media experience.

You should:

- Reply to comments and messages quickly.
- Ask questions in captions.
- Like and respond to followers' comments.
- Pin high-performing or important posts.

It's not just about the views; engagement is crucial.

8.2.6 Smart Use of Facebook Insights

Facebook provides a wide range of background reporting and insights to help you track your online activity and to monitor which posts your audience respond to best, what they are sharing and when they are online and following your posts.

You can track:

- Reach & engagement rate
- What content people share/save
- Best posting times
- Audience demographics

There are multiple online sources now to help you get the most out of Facebook Insights and guides you can access to learn more about how it works. AI applications can also help you manage your social media.

8.2.7 Community Building

- Encourage user-generated content.
- Highlight followers or customers.
- Cross share posts – if you are following other local communities or veterans' agencies/organisations you can share their posts on your own page, you can also do this with the main Royal British Legion Scotland Facebook page. This is an excellent way to share information and to reach a much wider audience.
- Use your page to highlight special people, those who deserve recognition and thanks and those you collaborate and work with to support veterans in the local community, i.e., local firms, other Legion Branches, local community groups.

A page that feels like a **community** outperforms a page that feels like a billboard.

8.2.8 Guidelines

- It is important that you set clear community guidelines, what content, behaviour and so on, will be accepted on your page. This ensures that inappropriate content, disputes and harassment are kept offline. If you experience issues with your social media content, comments or usage we have a Social Media Policy which sets out what is acceptable and what is not.
- Moderate your comments to keep it positive and spam-free.

Creating and managing a Facebook page can feel overwhelming but it just takes some practice and commitment and learning as you go. It is a very powerful tool to help raise awareness of your work and a tremendously rewarding way to engage with many people.

8.3 Printed Materials

Although digital is the current way forward printed materials still have their place. If you are creating or plan to create any printed materials, i.e., flyers, posters, commemorative programmes etc., you should consult the Brand Guidelines for the full information on the do's and don'ts for this type of imagery.

You may choose to work with a local designer/printer or have someone in house with this expertise; the Brand Guidelines will help them create what you need to promote the Area/Branch activity and key events.

If you require additional support or guidance, you should contact Head Office.

8.4 In-person events

Whether you are running your own event or have been invited to attend an event, both are excellent opportunities to raise awareness of your work and to engage with new people.

In person events provide you with the opportunity to engage with a wider audience beyond your membership and to network and develop relationships with the local community.

These are an excellent opportunity either to "set out your stall" visually with a physical stand or verbally by acting as an ambassador for RBLS.

In person events also provide excellent opportunities for comradeship and connection, not just with your own membership and community but with others in the RBLS and Armed Forces network.

Liaising with neighbouring RBLS Branches for joint comradeship events is encouraged and often a rewarding experience for all who take part.

All Branches should when planning events and liaising with community representatives be mindful of the local geography and neighbouring Branches. It is common courtesy to ensure your activity does not encroach on another RBLS Branch. If there is an overlap in geography, then you should engage with your neighbouring RBLS Branch(es) to ensure they support your activity or to explore possible collaborative opportunities.

9. Fundraising

9.1 Fundraising is important because it enables charities and non-profit organisations to deliver their mission, sustain services, and create positive impact in their communities. Without fundraising, most charities would not have the financial resources needed to operate effectively.

Here are the main reasons why fundraising matters:

Supports the charity's mission

Fundraising provides the income needed to deliver programmes, services, and activities that help beneficiaries and advance the organisation's charitable purpose.

Sustains essential services

Many charities provide services that people rely on, such as welfare support, community programmes, or advice services. Fundraising helps ensure these services can continue long term.

Builds community engagement

Fundraising events and campaigns allow members of the public to get involved, show support, and connect with the cause, strengthening the relationship between the charity and its community.

Raises awareness

Fundraising activities often highlight the issues a charity works to address. This helps educate the public and increase understanding of the cause.

Provides independence and resilience

Diversified fundraising (donations, events, grants, partnerships) reduces reliance on a single income source and helps charities remain financially stable and independent.

Enables growth and innovation

Additional funds allow charities to develop new projects, expand services, and respond to emerging needs in the community.

Demonstrates public support

Successful fundraising shows that a charity's work is valued by supporters, donors, and the wider community. This can strengthen credibility with funders and partners.

9.2 Fundraising Throughout the year

There are many ways a Branch can fundraise throughout the year through targeted activity, comradeship events, projects and campaigns led by the Branch with the local community.

It is important to remember that when fundraising it should sit within the charitable purposes and aims set out within the Constitution. A Branch can raise funds for itself, RBLS and to support veterans and their dependents in Scotland.

RBLS will with effect from June 2026 run a Fundraising Fortnight which is a targeted fundraising Campaign the entire organisation can be involved in to help raise vital funds for the charity. Head Office provides all guidance required to participate and a full Fundraising Toolkit.

In all your fundraising activity it is important you follow the Brand Guidelines on the use of the name and correct logo. This is vital to ensure that funds raised are for RBLS (local or National) correctly and retained within the charity and not diverted elsewhere.

RBLS has a full Fundraising Strategy and additional information and guidelines for Areas and Branches so if you need further support or help with fundraising ideas you can contact Head Office.

10. Complaints

Complaints at any level of the organisation can be time consuming and take up substantial resources. It is important that all complaints are dealt with efficiently and professionally by those involved.

The detail provided in this section relates to the internal RBLS complaints process, where complaints are raised by members of RBLS about members, office holders, Trustees and staff of RBLS.

RBLS has a separate Complaints Handling Policy and method of reporting for members of the public who wish to complain about the services or support they have received from RBLS, or unacceptable conduct of any representative of the organisation.

As per Clause 19 of the Constitution, all members and Trustees of RBLS are subject to the complaints and disciplinary procedures outlined in this Handbook. Head Office employees are dealt with in accordance with the RBLS Employee handbook and in line with employment law.

10.1 Who should complaints be directed to?

The following should be adhered to for non-Trustees (i.e., not Office Bearers):

- Complaints about individual members should be investigated by the relevant Branch Management Committee.
- Complaints about Area Council members should be investigated by the relevant Area Executive Committee.
- Complaints about Head Office Employees (other than the CEO) are investigated by the CEO in accordance with the employee handbook and employment law.

The following should be adhered to for Trustees or Committees:

- Complaints relating to the Branch Management Committee, Branch Club Committee or Area Councils (individuals or collectively) should be investigated by the relevant Area Executive Committee.
- Complaints relating to an Area Executive officer (individuals or collectively) should be investigated by the National Board of Trustees or other suitable persons appointed by the NBT.
- Complaints relating to the CEO should be investigated by a Committee established by the National Board of Trustees, the CEO will be dealt with in accordance with employment law.
- Complaints relating to the National Board of Trustees (individuals or collectively) should be investigated by a Committee established by the NBT. The Committee must be unconflicted and independent of both the source and subject of a complaint or grievance

Those wishing to make a complaint should adhere to the process outlined above and should not attempt to bypass the complaints process by complaining directly to Head Office or the CEO.

10.2 Good practice

1. Regardless of the size of your Branch (and/or Club) all members should know their complaints or grievances will be dealt with fairly and consistently.
2. All members of RBLS should have the facility to bring their complaint to the appropriate person(s) (as noted above), if they have concerns and/or evidence about the inappropriate conduct or actions of an individual or group of individuals who represent the organisation.
3. Mediation can be used at any stage of the complaint process, where an independent, impartial person works with both sides to find a solution. Mediation should be encouraged from the outset (if both sides agree) as often an initial complaint can be the result of a personal disagreement, personality clash, or a misunderstanding based on hearsay. Mediation with both sides can help clear up misunderstandings before a complaint escalates to the full investigation and a potential disciplinary action.
4. Genuine complaints should be raised where possible in writing, stating the date, the complainants name(s), the details of the complaint and who it relates to. If multiple parties wish to complain about the same person or group of persons, they should submit their complaints together for consideration.
5. If you receive a complaint where you feel you have a conflict of interest and understand you will be unable to follow the process through impartially, you should declare this at the outset so alternative appropriate person(s) can take the enquiry forward.
6. If the complainant notes from the outset that they feel the appropriate person(s) which should investigate their complaint have a conflict of interest or will not be impartial, it can be referred to the RBLS Complaints Panel (see page 67).
7. Approved person(s), Investigation Teams, Disciplinary Panels and Appeal Panels should all keep accurate and detailed written records of their work through the complaints process. It is advised that all correspondence with complainants and the accused are sent recorded mail to ensure tracking and confirmation of receipt.
8. Handling complaints involves processing personal data, so you must follow the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. You must have a lawful basis to collect and investigate the complaint and only collect information that is necessary to investigate the complaint. Records should not be kept indefinitely, for minor complaints a typical retention period is 1-2 years, for serious disciplinary cases 6 years after closure and for Safeguarding issues it can be longer if legally required.

9. Complaints procedures can be stressful for everyone involved including the complainant and the accused. Care should be taken by those involved in any enquiry, investigation or disciplinary throughout the process to ensure support is offered, including wellbeing checks if required.

10.3 First Steps

1. The appropriate person(s) should acknowledge any complaint received in writing, so the complainant knows their concerns have been noted and are being dealt with. The response should confirm that an initial enquiry will take place, to determine if a full investigation is required. It should be noted to the complainant that the appropriate person(s) may require to speak with them further as part of the initial evidence gathering, to determine the validity and seriousness of the complaint.

2. Complainants should refrain from sending additional correspondence to the appropriate person(s) while the initial enquiry is carried out, unless they are invited to provide additional evidence or clarify any concerns raised.

3. Any appropriate person(s) carrying out an initial enquiry must do so without delay.

4. If a complaint raises allegations that could be criminal in nature the approved person(s) from the outset should determine if there is immediate danger or safeguarding risk. If there is credible evidence of a criminal offence it should be reported to Police Scotland.

5. On conclusion of an initial enquiry the appropriate person(s) should determine if the complaint holds merit and is genuine and if an investigation is required.

6. If the appropriate person(s) determines no further investigation is required, the complainant should be informed in writing, and **no further action is taken**.

10.4 Proceeding to an Investigation

In certain circumstances the appropriate person(s) may decide at the outset, that the seriousness of the allegations and role of the accused warrant suspension pending investigation.

This course of action may be taken to ensure the process is not impeded by the accused remaining in post while an investigation is carried out. For example, allegations of serious fraud or theft against a Branch or Area Treasurer would warrant suspension pending investigation, to ensure they have no further access to Branch or Area financial affairs until a full investigation can be concluded. This protects the individual and the organisations reputation and allows the process to proceed without prejudice.

1. If the appropriate person(s) determines an investigation is required, an Investigation Team should be formed of 3 people (with no conflict of interest) to review the complaint and any evidence gathered during the initial enquiry.

2. There is no requirement at this stage to inform the complainant an investigation will take place or to provide the accused with details of the complaint that has been raised against them.

3. The Investigation Team should meet at the earliest opportunity to discuss the complaint and agree a plan of action on what further evidence needs to be gathered to fully investigate the matter, and who they would wish to interview as part of the information gathering.

4. A full and thorough investigation should be concluded as quickly as possible, the Investigation Team should record minutes from their meetings and keep a detailed record of any notes and interviews conducted.

5. Those carrying out the investigation must remain professional and courteous throughout the process of gathering evidence and conducting interviews.

6. Complainants should refrain from sending additional correspondence to the appropriate person(s) while the investigation is carried out, unless they are invited to provide additional evidence or clarify any concerns raised.

7. On conclusion of the investigation the Investigation Team should confirm their findings and recommendations in writing to the appropriate person(s) without delay.

10.5 Reporting the outcome of an investigation to appropriate person(s):

- Findings on an individual member are reported to the Branch Management Committee
- Findings on an Area Council member are reported the relevant Area Executive Committee
- Findings on a Branch Management Committee, Branch Club Committee or Area Councils (individuals or collectively) are reported to the relevant Area Executive Committee
- Findings on an Area Executive officer (individuals or collectively) are reported to the National Board of Trustees
- Findings on a member of staff are reported to the National Board of Trustees via the CEO
- Findings on the CEO are reported to the National Board of Trustees
- Findings on the National Board of Trustees (individuals or collectively) are reported to Board

10.6 Moving on to a Disciplinary Hearing

1. The appropriate person(s)should decide without delay if a disciplinary hearing is required based on the findings and recommendations of the Investigation Team.

2. If no disciplinary hearing is required the complainant should be informed in writing, and **no further action is taken**.

3. If a Disciplinary Hearing is required, a Disciplinary Panel must be formed without delay, comprised of 3 individuals (with no conflict of interest). The Investigation Team may be nominated by the appropriate person(s) to take the matter forward as the Disciplinary Panel or a new panel may be created if there are sufficient appropriate persons to do so.
4. The Disciplinary Panel must issue a letter without delay to the accused, giving a minimum of 14 days' notice to attend a hearing. The letter should be accompanied by all necessary paperwork outlining the accusation against them and a copy of the complaints process as detailed in the Branch Handbook.
5. The accused has the right to nominate a person to accompany them to the hearing. That person may attend the hearing as an observer but must not speak on behalf of the accused or question the Disciplinary Panel, unless invited to do so by a member of the Panel.
6. If the accused does not respond to the invite to a disciplinary hearing or fails to attend on the date agreed (without good reason), the Disciplinary Panel may proceed with the hearing and reach a final decision without the accused being present.
7. During the Disciplinary Hearing the Panel should remain impartial, they should clearly state how the hearing will be carried out, what evidence will be discussed and the accused's right to reply and sharing of evidence. The accused should be allowed to explain their position and to address all allegations made against them.
8. All persons present at a Disciplinary Hearing should conduct themselves with respect for each other and engage in open and constructive dialogue.
9. On conclusion of the hearing, it should be confirmed to the accused what the next steps will be and the expected timeframe for the Disciplinary Panel to reach a decision. If further investigation is required, which may create a delay in proceedings, this should be explained.
10. The Disciplinary Panel must on conclusion of the hearing discuss their findings and agree on whether disciplinary action/sanctions are required.
11. The Disciplinary Panel should present their findings and recommendation in writing to the appropriate person(s).
12. If the recommendation of the Disciplinary Panel is that no disciplinary action is required, the accused and the complainant should be informed immediately in writing, **no further action is taken**.
13. If the recommendation of the Disciplinary Panel is that sanctions are required, this should be confirmed in writing to the accused and appropriate person(s) without delay.
14. All sanctions and correspondence with the accused/complainant should be documented in writing and records kept for future reference by the appropriate person(s) on behalf of the Branch, Area, Head Office or NBT.

10.7 Sanctions

All sanctions imposed should be fair and proportionate to the nature of the complaint and evidence gathered against the accused.

Sanctions may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Reprimand
- Suspension of membership (not exceeding two years)
- Exclusion from holding office or any other Trustee positions within RBLS (for a set period or permanently)
- Expulsion

If the sanction imposed is suspension of membership, the sanction shall be regarded as an immediate suspension of a member from all rights and benefits of membership of the RBLS. The accused cannot transfer membership or attempt to join another Branch while an investigation/disciplinary is ongoing or during the period of any suspension.

If the sanction imposed is exclusion from holding office or any other Trustee position within RBLS, the sanction shall be regarded as an immediate removal from office, either for a set period or permanently (as detailed post Disciplinary Hearing). The accused cannot transfer membership or attempt to join another Branch to hold office while an investigation/disciplinary is ongoing or during the period of any exclusion.

Where an individual or individuals are expelled, they shall not be eligible to re-apply for membership of RBLS. Their membership will be permanently rescinded.

Only in exceptional circumstances, i.e., if the evidence or information used during the disciplinary procedure is found to be defective or false, or if the National Board of Trustees feel the there is evidence to cast serious doubt over the fairness and impartiality of the disciplinary process, will an expulsion decision be reviewed.

Head Office should be notified immediately if a member or Trustee of RBLS has been suspended, excluded or expelled, so the appropriate information may be recorded on the database. For Trustee roles OSCR should be notified as required so records can be updated.

10.7.1 Who decides the sanctions

- The Branch Committee decide sanctions to be imposed on a member(s).
- The Area Executive Committee decide sanctions to be imposed on an Area Council member(s).
- The Area Executive Committee decide sanctions to be imposed on a Branch Management Committee, Branch Club Committee or Area Councils (individuals or collectively).
- The National Board of Trustees decide sanctions to be imposed on an Area Executive officer (individuals or collectively).

Once sanctions are decided, the approved person(s) should confirm immediately in writing to the accused the outcome of the Disciplinary Hearing, including the detail of the sanction(s) to be imposed and the date which they come into effect. The correspondence should also confirm that the accused has the right to appeal within 14 days of receiving the letter, the criteria under which they can appeal, who they should appeal to, and their right to be accompanied at the Appeal Hearing.

There is no requirement to confirm to the complainant the detail of the sanctions against the accused.

- Head Office Staff will be dealt with by the CEO in accordance with the employee handbook and employment law
- The CEO will be dealt with by the National Board of Trustees in accordance with the employee handbook and employment law
- NBT sanctions will be dealt with by members of the National Board of Trustees who are unconflicted and independent of both the source and subject of any complaint

10.7.2 What happens if the accused rescind their membership or leave office while an investigation/disciplinary is ongoing?

- If a member rescinds their membership or leaves office while an investigation/disciplinary is ongoing, this does not negate the need for the process to continue. The approved person(s) should continue with their investigation or disciplinary to reach a suitable conclusion and recommendation.

10.8 Appeals

1. The accused cannot appeal sanctions against them simply because they disagree with the final decision. An appeal may be lodged under the following criteria:
    a. Evidence of a conflict of interest from a member(s) of the Disciplinary Panel.
    b. Evidence that due process was not followed by the Disciplinary Panel and the accused was treated unfairly.
    c. Presentation of any new evidence from the accused to support their case that was not heard originally.
2. If the accused wishes to appeal the decision they must respond in writing to the appropriate person(s) within 14 days of receipt of the disciplinary outcome letter. They must confirm the basis on which they are appealing the decision using the criteria noted in Point 1.
3. On receipt of the request for an appeal, the appropriate person(s) must inform the appropriate party (depending on the role of the accused and their position

with the organisation). An Appeal Panel should be appointed to conduct the Appeal Hearing.

4. An Appeal Hearing should be arranged without delay and communicated in writing to the accused, giving them a minimum of 14 days advance notice of the Appeal Hearing date. The correspondence should confirm the accused has the right to nominate a person to accompany them to the Appeal Hearing. That person may attend the hearing as an observer but must not speak on behalf of the accused or ask questions, unless invited to do so by a member of the Appeal Panel.
5. If the accused does not respond to the invite to an Appeal Hearing or fails to attend on the date agreed (without good reason), the Appeal Panel have the right to reject the appeal and the matter is closed.
6. If the Appeal Panel decide on conclusion of the Appeal Hearing that the original sanction(s) still stand, the accused should be informed in writing within 14 days, as should the appropriate person(s) involved in the early stages of the complaint. There is no requirement to confirm the outcome of an appeal hearing to the complainant.
7. The Appeal Panel may decide to recommend sanctions are increased, reduced or dismissed. If this is the case, they should communicate this to the accused and the appropriate person(s) in writing within 14 days.
8. The decision of the Appeal Panel is final, and the accused has no further recourse beyond this point.

10.9 Vexatious Complaints

It is the policy of RBLS that all volunteers, staff, and Trustees have the right to work and represent the organisation with being subject to behaviours of actions that are deemed unacceptable or "vexatious" in nature.

It is understood that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to contact being made. RBLS does not view a specific behaviour as unacceptable, just because an individual is forceful or determined. It is accepted that being persistent can sometimes be a positive advantage when trying to resolve an issue, and volunteers, staff, Trustees and members should resist making any swift judgements about individuals in such situations.

The actions, however, of individuals who are angry, demanding, or persistent, may often result in unreasonable demands on RBLS staff, office bearers and resources. It will mostly be these actions that RBLS consider as unacceptable and in need of effective and sensitive management. Behaviours and actions may sometimes be deemed vexatious where previous or current contacts with the individual show that they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour
- Unreasonable Demands
- Unreasonable Persistence

10.10 Criteria Definitions

Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

- Aggression is not restricted to acts that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (whether oral or written) that may cause volunteers, staff, office holders, Trustees and members to feel afraid, threatened or abused.
- Examples of behaviours grouped under this heading include threats; physical violence; personal verbal abuse; derogatory remarks and rudeness; or causing persistent offence to volunteers, staff, office holders, Trustees and members, by referring to their gender, race, disability, age or sexual orientation. RBLS also considers that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can be considered as abusive behaviour.
- RBLS volunteers, staff, office holders, Trustees and members should be treated courteously and with respect. Violence or abuse towards any of these parties is unacceptable.

Unreasonable Demands

- Individuals may make what RBLS considers unreasonable demands on its services through the amount of information they seek; the nature and scale of service they expect; insisting on full responses to be made more urgently than the response time set in the relevant complaint procedure and persistently demanding to speak to the Chief Executive Officer or other senior members of staff or Trustees. What amounts to unreasonable demands will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised by the complainant.
- Examples of actions grouped under this heading, include demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale; insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular person; continual phone calls, e-mails or letters; repeatedly changing the substance of the issues or continually raising new issues to prolong contact whilst the original matters are still being addressed. In respect of these criteria care must always be taken not to ignore any new issues, which may be significantly different from the original complaint. These should be noted and recorded as separate points of complaint.
- RBLS considers these demands as unacceptable and unreasonable if they start to impact substantially on the work of volunteers, staff, office holders, Trustees and members.

Unreasonable Persistence

- RBLS recognises that some individuals will not or cannot accept that RBLS is unable to assist them further or provide a level of service other than that provided already. An individual may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken in relation to their concerns/complaint or contact staff or Trustees excessively about the same issue. Complainants may also attempt to override or circumvent the RBLS disciplinary process by involving, for example, the CEO at an early or premature stage of every complaint.
- Examples of actions grouped under this heading include excessively persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a matter; persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what the appropriate person(s) can or cannot do; continuing to pursue a matter without presenting any new information; or persisting in pursuing a matter where it has been fully investigated and full action has already been taken in accordance with the RBLS complaints procedure but the individual will not acknowledge that fact.
- The way in which these individuals' approach RBLS may be entirely reasonable, but it is their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so that is not.
- RBLS considers the persistent contact to be unacceptable when it takes up what RBLS regards as being a disproportionate amount of time and resources.

What to do if you are subject to Vexatious behaviour from a complainant or an accused individual.

If you are continually subject to vexatious behaviour from a complainant who is unreasonably persistent or an accused individual who will not accept the outcome of a Disciplinary/Appeal Hearing, the case can be referred to the RBLS Complaints Panel.

10.11 RBLS Complaints Panel

The National Board of Trustees agreed in December 2024 that a formal Complaints Panel should be set up to act as a subcommittee of the National Board of Trustees and to provide additional support to Head Office and the CEO.

The Complaint Panel may be called upon under the following circumstances:

- Where it is identified at the outset of a complaint that the appropriate investigating person(s) (as detailed in the Constitution and handbooks) may not provide a fair and impartial enquiry or investigation, the Complaints Panel will be called upon to intercede at the early stages to ensure a fair process with no conflict of interest is delivered.
- If an investigation/disciplinary is not being carried out by the appropriate person(s) following the guidance in the Constitution and Branch Handbook, the Complaints panel may be called upon to intercede to determine why the correct process is not being followed and what additional support or guidance the investigating party requires.
- Where an investigation/disciplinary has been concluded adopting the correct process and the final decision is challenged out with the normal appeal period or without good reason, the Complaints Panel will be called upon to ensure the situation is resolved.
- The Complaints Panel will be available to intercede to support a Branch, Club, Area or Head Office if any party is subject to vexatious complaints or complaints of a spurious nature which cannot be dealt with by the appropriate investigating person(s).
- The Complaints Panel will provide support to the CEO and NBT when required, to assist with investigations/disciplinaries for complaints about staff, Area Executive members and NBT members which is in line with the guidance in the Constitution and Branch Handbook.
- The Complaint Panel may be called upon by the CEO and Head Office Staff to provide additional support with complaints that do not fall within the detailed categories in the Constitution and handbooks. These could include complaints from the general public or external parties on any subject or in relation to anyone associated with RBLS.

11. Club Complaints

The Club Committee are responsible for the management of the Club. Often the Branch and Club have the same Committee members, so it is important for Office Bearers to understand the difference between complaints raised regarding Club matters/Club paid employees and Branch matters.

The Club Committee have the power to reprimand, suspend or expel a Club member according to the process in the Club Model Rule Book.

The same good practices noted for the Branch in this section of the Handbook should be applied to any investigation or disciplinary in relation to the Club.

Branch and Club Committee should communicate openly with one another if an investigation is ongoing with a member or office holder, particularly in cases where a member is expelled from RBLS.

If a member or office holder is suspended or excluded from the Branch it will not automatically mean the same applies to their membership or role within the Club and vice versa. Both Committees should take a sensible view on the findings of an investigation and any Disciplinary Hearing outcome in relation to Club business, to determine if it is appropriate or proportionate to apply the same sanction to a member or office holder in relation to their Branch membership and responsibilities.

11.1 Complaints involving Employees

Good practice for charity clubs (or small charities with employees) when handling employee complaints is to have a clear, fair, and documented process that protects staff, the organisation, and beneficiaries. Guidance in the UK generally aligns with standards promoted by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS).

The Club should also have a policy in place which details the process staff should go through to raise a grievance.

If an employee of the club has a problem at work, it is usually good for them to raise it informally first. This means steps can be taken to resolve the matter without using a formal procedure like a grievance.

The Employer – which is the Club/Club Committee, should be open to resolving problems reported to them without immediately initiating a formal procedure. This can resolve issues quickly and it help maintain positive relationships at work.

If a formal grievance procedure is required guidelines are available online through

https://www.acas.org.uk/grievance-procedure-step-by-step

ACAS procedures apply to employers/employees only. If a grievance or complaint is raised at the Club about an RBLS member, office holder or volunteer the RBLS internal complaints process noted earlier in this section will apply.

12. Complaints vs Whistleblowing

12.1 Which process should I use?

Royal British Legion Scotland encourages openness and wants people to feel confident about raising concerns. There are two different routes, depending on the type of issue.

12.2 What is a complaint?

Complaints are usually about individual experience or dissatisfaction and can often be resolved informally. If you have a complaint, you should use the Complaints Procedure as detailed in the RBLS Handbook.

12.3 What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is used to report serious wrongdoings that affect the charity as a whole and are in the public interest. Whistleblowing is not about personal dissatisfaction, but about protecting the charity, its beneficiaries, and its assets.

12.4 Summary

The table below provides a summary of the differences so your concern goes to the right place and can be handled properly.

What is a Complaint – when you are unhappy	What is Whistleblowing – when you wish to raise a concern about
About a service provided by the charity	Misuse or theft of charity funds
About a decision which affects you personally	Fraud, bribery or corruption
With communication, behaviour or delays	Serious governance failures
With Membership administration or processes	Trustee misconduct
Volunteer or staff conduct that affects you directly	Breaches of charity law or OSCR requirements
	Serious safeguarding issues
	Risks to beneficiaries, staff, volunteers or the public
	Attempts to hide any of the above

The full RBLS Whistleblowing Policy is available on request from Head Office. This information is provided as a supplement to the Complaints section of the Handbook.

12.5 Key differences at a glance

Complaints	Whistleblowing
About personal experience	About serious wrongdoing
Affects you directly	Affects the charity or public
Often service-related	Governance, legal or ethical issues
Usually handled by staff	Usually handled by trustees
Resolution-focused	Investigation-focused

If you are unsure which to use

If you are uncertain:

- You may ask for confidential advice before submitting
- The charity may redirect your concern to the correct process
- You will not be penalised for raising a genuine concern in good faith

The most important thing is that concerns are raised, not that the "perfect" route is chosen.

What not to use whistleblowing for

Whistleblowing should not be used for:

- Routine complaints or disagreements
- Membership votes, elections, or policy differences
- Personal disputes
- Issues already resolved through another process

Using the correct route helps ensure fairness and timely handling.

Commitment to fairness and good governance

Royal British Legion Scotland is committed to:

- Taking all concerns seriously
- Handling them proportionately and independently
- Acting in the best interests of the charity
- Meeting OSCR's expectations for transparency and accountability

No one will be disadvantaged for raising a concern honestly and in good faith.

This Handbook is a working document which should serve as a useful guide to all Branches (and Areas).

There may be additional sections or information you feel would be useful and we are happy to receive feedback on that as the Handbook will be reviewed and updated throughout the year based on any changes to our internal processes, Constitutional changes (following the annual membership vote) and regulatory updates.

If you would like to provide feedback or make any suggestions, please email info@legionscotland.org.uk.

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