MINUTES OF THE

OVERSEAS FORUM

HELD IN

THE BURDETT ROOM
THE RIVIERA CONFERENCE CENTRE, TORQUAY, DEVON
Friday 16th May 2014 at 1400hrs.

Present:-	
Rod Bedford	Chairman Overseas Forum (Membership Council)
John Crisford	National Chairman TRBL
Terry Whittles	National Vice-Chairman TRBL
Martyn Tighe	Board of Trustees
Stuart Allen	Membership Council
Bill Burn	Membership Council
Alan Cathery	Membership Council
John Clark	Membership Council
Roger Garratt	Membership Council
Chris Simpkins	Director General
John Graham	Deputy Director General (Director of Finance)
Charles Byrne	Director of Fundraising
Stephen Cooper	Commercial Director
Sue Freeth	Director of Operations
Sharron Lewis-James	Director of Human Resources
Bob Gamble	Assistant Director Membership & Armed Forces Engagement
Colin Gordon	Assistant Director (Operations) South
James Goodwin	Head of Armed Forces Engagement
Marielle Postill	Head of Membership
Magdalena De Lima Santos	Membership Services Manager
Beverley Harrison	Membership Support Manager
Michael Poore	Internal Auditor (Compliance)
Kayleigh McFeeters	Membership Support Officer (Overseas) – Secretary Overseas Forum
John Allsop BEM	Bordeaux
David Bean	Paris
Christine Berridge	Somme
Pauline Clarke-Jaisingh	Dortmund
John Davies	Sauerland
Bert Elson BEM	Chonburi
David Harpin	Torremolinos
Helen Hefferman	Osnabruck
Lorna Hurn	Coin
David Jaisingh	Minden
Mary Jansen	Paderborn
Udo Jansen	Fallingbostel Heide
Roy Johnson	Munster
Jean Kelly	Tenerife
Mary Le Corney	Benalmadena
John Maskell-Bott	Falklands Islands

	John McKillop	Switzerland
	Robert Neale	Gutersloh
	Mike Newick	Malta
	Keith Orton	Bergen-Hohne
	Colin Piling	Malta
	Steve Reid	District of Germany
	Terry Salmon	Herford
	Margery Taylor	Mijas Costa
Visitors:-	Stephen Berridge	Somme
	James Brindley	Coppull
	Jackie Burn	Over Wye
	Michael Healy MBE	Nice-Monaco
	Wilhelmina van Tekelenburg	Nice-Monaco
	Raymond Le Corney	Torremolinos
	Kersten Neale	Gutersloh
	Chris Wyatt	Hondon Valley
	Peggy Wyatt	Hondon Valley
	Sarah Maskell-Bott	Falkland Islands
	Elizabeth Dean	Paris
	Jacquie Bedford	Somme
Apologies:-	Tam Pearce	Rheindahlen

Item 1 **Exhortation**

1.1 The National Chairman led the Act of Homage.

Item 2 **Chairman's Introductory Remarks**

2.1 The Chairman of the Forum, Rod Bedford, requested those present to join him in an additional silence dedicated to the memory of the 177 members of Overseas Branches who have passed away in the last year and to past Overseas Forum Chairman and Board of Trustee member Eddie Hefferman.

2.2 The Chairman welcomed the delegates and visitors and thanked them for making the effort to attend. He said there were attendees from 23 branches and four Districts present at the forum – this meant that just over 20% of Overseas Branches were represented at the meeting and this was higher than the percentage of branches represented at Annual Conference as a whole.

2.3 The Chairman asked the delegates present for a show of hands of who had not attended Annual Conference before. As this was a minority of those present he stressed the importance of different Branch members getting the opportunity to come to conference. He said this was important for the future of the Branches, giving other members the opportunity to learn and encouraging change.

2.4 The Chairman offered his congratulations to John Allsop of the Bordeaux Branch, and Bert Elson of the Chonburi Branch who were both recently awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to the British community in their local area.

2.5 The Chairman advised the delegates and their guests that he had

invited members from the Board of Trustees, the Membership Council, Directors and Heads of Departments from Haig House to attend the Forum. He introduced those that were present and asked them to stand up to identify themselves.

Item 3 **Previous Minutes**

3.1 The Chairman presented the minutes of the Overseas Forum from 2013 held in Llandudno and asked if there were any comments.

3.2 It was Proposed by Mr D Harpin, delegate for Torremolinos Branch, and Seconded by Mr S Reid, delegate for the District of Germany, that the minutes be accepted as a true account.

Item 4 **Matters Arising**

4.1 There were no matters arising.

Item 5 **Operations Update – Sue Freeth, Director of Operations**

5.1 Sue Freeth introduced Colin Gordon, Assistant Director (Operations) South, who now manages welfare delivery overseas. She also explained that Ryan Allain, London Area Manager, is the person responsible for the day-to-day Operations support to overseas work.

5.2 Sue started by giving an overview of the work the Operations directorate has done. In the last 18 months the focus has been on getting the new directorate up and running. She confirmed that the UK part of this structure is now in place and the focus will now turn to Overseas. Up to this point, there have been no changes to overseas support, but in the year ahead the plan will include a review. This will include work to adapt the knowledge base, contact centre and other infrastructure which to configure them to provide support for Overseas as necessary.

5.3 Sue explained that the review will start in Germany in view of the changes that will take place there. She confirmed that members will be involved through the Membership Council.

5.4 Sue said that in one-years time tangible differences should be able to be seen.

5.5 Sue then talked about Overseas Grants in 2012/13. In total there were 230 cases managed, including Spain, Portugal and Malta.

5.6 The most common areas of for cases were travel costs (repatriations), maintenance grants, essential food and groceries, funeral and medical (opticians and dental costs) and mobility aids and fixtures. The total spend was £250,826.93, with £121,839.18 brought in from other organisations and an almonisation rate of 49%.

5.7 Sue highlighted some trends coming from overseas cases. These include:

- There are more cases and enquiries coming from countries where there is political instability.
- Fewer medical requests are being received from countries such as Thailand and The Philippines.
- An older population means more requests are received for mobility aids and repatriations as people's care needs increase.
- Repatriations fall into 3 categories- holiday makers, those who cannot

afford to live and those with higher care needs.

- There has been an increase in numbers from Commonwealth soldiers- Caribbean, African and Fijian.

5.8. Sue also noted that repatriation for older populations and recourse to public funds for care, housing and medical treatment is often a problem and a situation where repatriation is not always the solution.

Item 6 **Fundraising and Poppy Appeal Update – Director of Fundraising, Charles Byrne**

6.1 Charles Byrne started by saying that the Poppy Appeal is up, it is predicted to be in approximately £1 million ahead of last year. Overseas were also up by £200,000 on this time last year and Charles offered congratulations and his sincere thanks for not just fundraising but all the other engagement the Branches do to keep the Legions work alive around the world.

6.2 Charles gave an update on the Poppy Appeal. They are starting to look at a programme to introduce web-based ordering for PA materials. There will be a small trial of the new systems this year. It is hoped that phase two of the programme will add the ability for Poppy Appeal Organisers to account for the fundraising income they have collected. Further phases will aim to provide web based options for all of the routine activities performed by a PAO.

6.3 Charles told the delegates about the recent restructure at Aylesford. Among other things he said that the warehouse operating hours have been changed to increase efficiency and produce more Poppies.

6.4 Charles presented some new products including the Centenary pin of which 500,000 have been produced and are going well. Other products include wristbands in more colours and sizes and Centenary Wreaths.

6.5 Charles highlighted the main challenges and opportunities in fundraising at this time. One issue is that the Legion is still very cash based, with 85% of the funds raised are through cash transactions (excluding corporate partners and legacies). Another issue is that we are asking the same loyal supporters for help too often and new supporters are needed. The end of operations in Afghanistan is a good thing but history shows us that after these operations the public will start to forget and Charles emphasised the importance of planning for this. The Centenary years are the window of opportunity for the Legion and this is the ideal time to look for new for supporters.

6.6 Charles stressed the importance of presenting an expanding model, the Legion is a lot more than Remembrance and he will look at new channels (such as TV, radio and smart phones) to attract new audiences with new products.

6.7 Charles concluded his presentation by expressing how important the Centenary years are, we need to put the Legion in a position of strength so we can pass the torch of Remembrance to the next generation. If we do not deliberately lay the foundations for that now, we will miss the opportunity.

Item 7 **Membership – Marielle Postill, Head of Membership**

7.1. Marielle welcomed the delegates and said how pleased she was to see the overseas represented so well again this year.

7.2. She hoped that the new initiatives that the Membership Department

see as improvements are perceived the same by the Branches. She gave the example of the Membership Handbook now being accessed digitally.

7.3. Marielle encouraged the Branches to send any suggestions for future improvement to the MSO(O).

Item 8 **Membership Services Update – Magdalena De Lima Santa, Membership Services Manager**

8.1. Magda introduced herself as the new Membership Services Manager, she explained that she has come from the Operations department and had worked with some of the delegates in the past.

8.2. Magda explained that Membership Services were made up of two teams, the Central Data Input team at Eastleigh and the Membership Services team at Head Office.

8.3. Magda introduced the new MS4 form which she explained is a combination of the previous MEM20 and MS4 forms. These are available to order now from Aylesford. Branches can only order 50 forms at a time. Larger Branches may need more forms in specific circumstances and she explained they can be flexible with those requests on an individual basis. The previous MS4 form, which is black and white A4, will still be accepted until the end of the calendar year. From 2015 CDI who process them will only be accepting the new form.

8.4. Magda explained that as of 13th May 2014, there were 300,833 members in the Legion. 10,102 of these are from Overseas Branches which makes up 3.36% of the total.

Item 9 **Membership Training Update – Beverley Harrison, Membership Support Manager**

9.1. **Membership Training Calendar** - Beverley presented the latest version of the training calendar. Training is normally delivered as a response to identified need. Some training being arranged currently is in response to identified need and not where a bid has been placed because training is due in this locality.

9.2. There have been 56 courses run in the last year and six of these were held Overseas. A course in South Spain is currently being planned.

9.3. **Resourcing** - The Membership Training team is managed within Membership Support by Beverley and formed of Jan Martin and Joanne D'Souza, with Monique Collins as the newly appointed part-time administrator. Beverley is certain that with a permanent administrator, delivery and support of training will improve. Courses are currently running with a 75% attendance rate.

9.4. She explained there is a specific budget for overseas membership training and everything is paid for directly in accordance with SOP42 requirements that we are obliged to follow.

9.5. Beverley highlighted that this team does not deliver welfare training, but they are working with the Training Officers working towards volunteer development that could include Members in support of the wider Legion objectives. Membership Training does not currently include LOMAS but it will slowly be involved as the project develops.

9.6. **The Future –** Beverley assured delegates that she is aware of the shortage of Independent Examiners. Those IEs qualified initially on the

TAG provisions between late 2010 and Nov 2012 are now running out of their 2 year currency if they passed in 2011. These IEs need to be updated in order that the Legion complies with the Charity Commission. IE requalification will be completed shortly by means of an open book test that can be taken at home or in the District Office then marked by the Training Team. Those in this position will be approached shortly by Membership Training asking if they intend to renew their status. Only if the IE did not meet the standard would he or she be expected to attend another IE course. IEs will be contacted directly about this, copied to the C/DTO and C/DSec, but in the mean time if there are any concerns whilst this rolls out please contact the training team.

9.7. She reminded delegates that Accountants do not need an IE qualification as they can audit accounts in their own right.

9.8. Beverley noted that more on-line based training is needed. The content on the Legion sites is being updated to reflect recent changes and she is looking at working with the Volunteer Support Unit in order to link from on-line modules to take advantage of generic training then add Membership modules to refine the provision.

9.9. Beverley explained that Recruiting Advisors are on the radar and it is planned to assist CROs in training RAs to best meet their specific local needs and course material is being sent out on request by those qualified to do the training.

9.10. Lastly, Beverley said that Ceremonial Training is only delivered in UK.

Item 10 **<u>Overseas Support Update – Kayleigh McFeeters, Membership Support Officer (Overseas)</u>**

10.1. **Branch Fund Initiative** – Kayleigh reminded delegates about the Branch Fund Initiative (BFI) Account and clarified that Overseas Branches *can* use the BFI account but reiterated that it must be used only for excess funds the Branch may have. It is a high interest account and there is little point transferring small amounts of money on a frequent basis due to bank transfer fees and bank exchange rates.

10.2. **Gift Aid** - On MS4 Membership Application forms there is a choice for the new member to declare if Gift Aid can be reclaimed on their subscription. Kayleigh asked Branches when signing up a new member to encourage them to tick the Gift Aid box if they are or have been a UK tax payer.

10.3. **MS4 Forms –** Kayleigh advised delegates that in addition to the new standard MS4 forms that Magda talked about, Overseas have an electronic version. The electronic version was introduced to save time and money on postage but many branches are printing out the electronic version, filling it in by hand and posting it which defeats the object. Kayleigh is currently updating the electronic form to make it more user friendly but asked that if Branches are filling in an application by hand, please use the standard form.

10.4. **Branch Committee Positions –** Kayleigh reminded delegates of the Membership Handbook ruling on close family members holding committee positions (Part 4, 4.1.5, 3.3). She had noted that in some Branches, close family members, especially husbands and wives, were holding elected committee positions. This is not ideal and in some situations is not permitted. She said that she appreciates some

branches are struggling to get people into committee positions and if Branches find themselves in this situation she asked that they approach her or Rod Bedford.

10.5. **Overseas Insurance** – Kayleigh apologised for the recent emails concerning Branch insurance. Based on the responses she felt the need to clarify what provisions are available.

a. Branches within Europe are covered by the Legions public liability insurance.
b. Branches outside of Europe are not centrally covered. This is because insurance is too difficult and expensive for the legion to source and these Branches need to arrange their own cover.

10.6. **Conference Expenses** - All delegates attending Conference were told that as they incur higher travelling costs that those in the UK Head Office will refund 50% of their actual travel costs. These payments will only be made upon submission of a Conference Expense Claim Form and delegates MUST attach valid receipts or their copies.

10.7. **Kayleigh reminded delegates that** Formations are responsible for refunding the conference costs, such as accommodation, subsistence and travel costs not reimbursed by Head Office, to their delegates. She explained that Payments from Head Office will be made directly to a Legion's Formation by an electronic bank transfer. This will be made within approximately ten working days upon Head Office receiving a Conference Expense Claim Form with attached original receipts for travel or their copies

10.8. **Digital Update** – last year a generic overseas email address was introduced. Kayleigh said that this has worked brilliantly and means that when she is away, emails can still be picked up. She advised there were 88 Overseas Branches and she has an email address for at least one committee member in each of them. Kayleigh thanked the Branches for their support in getting to this point and stressed the time and financial savings being made by working this way.

10.9. She also asked branches to consider generic branch emails addresses so that changes in committee members doesn't mean having to inform everyone of new email addresses. It also means that committee members can keep their personal email and legion email separate.

10.10. **Finally** – Kayleigh thanked the delegates and branches for their patience and assistance during her first year in the role. She expressed her appreciation for all those volunteers who work extremely hard and are dedicated to the Legion.

Item 7. <u>Compliance – Michael Poore, Internal Auditor (Compliance)</u>

7.1. Michael introduced himself and gave a brief overview of his role. This included providing advice and guidance to Counties, Districts and Branches on how to comply with internal and external policies, procedures and regulations. He does this through a programme of compliance reviews and will make recommendations and the implementation of best practice to ensure compliance with Legion Policies and Procedures.

7.2. Standard procedure is that the MSO(O) will raise any concerns when accounts are submitted and Michael will investigate in the form of a review. Normally issues can be solved at a local level if this is not possible a visit to the branch and/or district may be necessary. A draft report will then be issued making recommendations and advise on actions for implementation

of best practice. At the end of the review a final report will be issued and the formation will be asked to implement the recommendations and actions which will be monitored.

7.3. Michael said he understood Overseas Branches have the added difficultly of complying with their local law but he stressed the importance of also working within the policies of the Legion.

Item 8 **Complaints – John Clark, Chairman of the Legion Complaints Committee**

8.1. John Clark said that even though there were relatively few complaints from Overseas he wanted to give a brief update on the process.

8.2. He advised that many of the complaints received recently have been minor disagreements and are not serious enough to make them suitable for investigation by the LCC.

8.3. John explained that anyone can make a complaint but they must follow the correct procedures as laid down in the Legions Complaints Procedure. Every complaint must include certain information and must go through the correct mediation channels before it is sent to himself as chairman of the LCC.

8.4. He stressed that Branches, Counties and Districts do not have any authority to issue penalty awards.

8.5. John confirmed that complaints can now be submitted via email as well as in writing.

8.6. John introduced a new generic email address for complaints: clcc@britishlegion.org.uk and encouraged delegates to direct any questions there.

8.7. Michael Healy MBE of the Nice-Monaco Branch said that in the past the names and positions of those members awarded penalties were published to Branches. He said this was useful and would like to see them reintroduced.

8.8. John explained that this information was in a letter that went to branches along with the magazine, but as it is no longer issued and the magazine is now in sight of the general public it was agreed to stop publishing this information in view of this. There have been recent discussions to include something similar in the electronic newsletter and there had already been one summary of awards and outcomes that were considered to have been as effective.

Item 13 **Questions**

13.1. National Compliance – Rheindahlen Branch

The Rheindahlen Branch delegate was not present so the Forum Chairman read out the question submitted by the Rheindahlen Branch:

'*How does Overseas management ensure compliance with national laws, with respect to the host nation and not UK Laws.*'

Marielle Postill explained that some amendments have been made to the Membership handbook. Overseas Districts and Branches have a responsibility to meet the requirements of the Royal Charter and the Membership Handbook but also to meet the requirements that they have locally under national legislation. For example, you need to return your accounts once a year but you are in a Country

where it is required every quarter you should meet with the Legion requirement but also with the local requirement.

13.2. Overseas Clubs/Bars - Rheindahlen Branch:

The Rheindahlen Branch delegate was not present so the Forum Chairman read out the question submitted by the Rheindahlen Branch:

'Discuss the guidelines which are in place for overseas branches having clubs/bars and whether these guidelines are in line with the RBL Charter and Rules, as well as the Branch's host nation's laws.'

Rod Bedford said that following a recent decision by the Membership Council, the Membership Handbook has been amended to clarify the policy on Overseas Bars and Clubs. The policy states that Overseas Branches shall not use the name of "The Royal British Legion" nor use RBL Branch accounts in connection with any bar or club used by the Branch. Neither shall they use the name of The Royal British Legion in connection with any financial accounts connected with bars or clubs.
It also confirms that no agreement/contract for a bar/club or its employees may be entered into using the name of The Royal British Legion by an Overseas Branch.
Rod concluded by saying if an Overseas Branch wants a bar or club this bar has to be completely independent from the Branch.

13.3. Overseas Publicity in Magazine:

John Allsop BEM was invited to read out the question submitted by the Bordeaux Branch:

'John explained that the question came from one of his longest serving members, Mr J Murphy. "In the past I have emailed the editor on the virtual lack of any information on overseas activities. I suggested a page in each issue for this but his reply stated that there was no free space and advertising was more important! Overseas Branches should be actively encouraged to submit news and articles but since they get no coverage there is no incentive!"'

Kayleigh McFeeters replied that the magazine receives hundreds of letters and photos from branches about local events which cannot all be published in the magazine. We are very much aware that branches, both in the UK and Overseas, would like to see more of their stories published. For this reason we have introduced an e-newsletter which is sent to every Branch by myself or your District secretary and contains information and updates from the Membership Council, and specific information for your local area.
We are working on further digital solutions but these are not yet developed enough for me to give you any details. In the meantime I really would encourage you to send me stories so I can include these in the e-newsletter.

13.4. Affiliation Fee Exchange Rate:

Peggy Wyatt was invited to read out the question submitted by District North Spain:

'Historically the cards are received during September but then Branches get notified by London, around beginning of October, the rate to be used. Some

Branches are saying this is too late for them to make calculations in order to ensure that cash payers and DD payers are paying the same amount for their membership.
Originally we suggested that during August, Branches inform members the cost of their up coming membership - bearing in mind the affiliation fee to London is going up £1 each year.
So the question is, can the rate be set - say beginning of September for the new membership year as this would assist Branches considerably.'

Marielle Postill explained the exchange rate was historically set a the beginning of the financial year because it made sense but it can be set earlier and will be set earlier this year.

13.5. Pathway for Growth outcomes:

Mike Newick was invited to read out the questions submitted by the Malta Branch:

'The Pathway for growth phase two was launched by the Secretary General in February 2013 but there has been very little feedback on the outcome of initiatives listed. No mention of the cost to date or whether the opening of surgeries has had any impact on servicemen living on the streets many feeling there is no hope and no support for them. How many volunteers have come forward to help? There are many bold statements made under the above name but what are the results.'

Sue Freeth started by saying progress on the new operating model is good news: the DG was to provide some top line numbers in his speech so anything she didn't address was to be covered the following day.
Sue explained it is early days for the Pop-in Centres as we have only three centres open to the public: Liverpool, Plymouth and Leeds. Liverpool opened the week before Christmas, Plymouth opened less than month before Annual Conference and Leeds only a few weeks before. Sue explained that in the UK the Legion is visible in many more places than it ever has been before. Brighton is occupied and Manchester will be occupied next.
So far they have seen 2,000 people face-to-face from surgeries and year to date they have provided expert advice to 16,000 people and financial support to half this number. Sue estimates about 20% of those are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
In terms of cost, Sue anticipates the project will come in under budget.
With regard to the question concerning how many volunteers have come forward; there were 427 trained and active volunteers supporting Area Teams at that time. Sue estimated that, by January 2015, the number of volunteers needed – including information officers, caseworkers and coordinators – will be between 1250/1300 depending on the length of a volunteer availability. So far, volunteers have been recruited from the membership as well as a minority of new people coming forward.

13.6. Branch Finances:

Chris Wyatt was invited to read out the question from the Hondon Valley branch:

'Can we please have clarification on the wording regarding paragraphs 1.1.9. and 1.1.10.. Paragraph 1.1.9. appears to give permission for money used for fundraising to be put through branch accounts whilst the paragraph 1.1.10. appears to say the opposite. The only difference is the first refers to an event

agreed to at a committee meeting of a branch - whilst the second is an event agreed at a branch meeting. As all functions are normally discussed and agreed by the committee members it would appear the second policy is irrelevant. Overseas Branches particularly in Spain have a difficulty in holding social events legally without putting the finances through the Branch Accounts. For an individual to organise regular social activities which are a major part of keeping our Branches active and benefiting our fundraising towards the Poppy Appeal we must on occasions collect money in advance. Under current regulations this money cannot enter Branch Accounts unless it is in connection with Poppy Appeal such as a Poppy Ball. Individuals are not legally able to open bank accounts without incurring personal tax implications and to hold money in a home can put the individual in danger of being burgled and the money not being covered by any insurance or the money at risk of misuse. As Branches hold events in order to donate surplus funds raised to the Poppy Appeal this would damage our Appeal total if these events could not be held and it would also have a detrimental effect on our Membership. As long as events are self funding and show a surplus towards the Poppy Appeal and are approved by Committee the funds should be allowed through Branch Funds. This could be monitored with an authority form showing the extent of the financing and percentage of surplus fund to be raised'.

Michael Poore started by defining what a social event is. This is an event where there is no Legion promotion or fundraising, it is purely social. He used the example of the Membership department Christmas dinner. Kayleigh organises it, she collects the money from individuals, looks after the funds and the department has a Christmas dinner. Kayleigh is trusted to look after the funds from individuals; this is a risk the individuals took. On the day of the Christmas dinner all individuals put £10.00 into the kitty (eg. 20 people x £10 =£200), at the end of the event there is still £100.00 left. The individuals can decide they want their share back, or they can opt to donate it to the Poppy Appeal. If they choose the latter they are not fundraising, they are donating. In this instance this is not a Legion event although all attendees are working for the Legion, in the same instance if all attendees at a dinner are Branch Members it is not a Legion event and is funded by individuals. As each individual has paid from their own funds and at no time have they passed through a bank account bearing the Legions name they cannot be considered Charitable Funds.
Chris Wyatt said that Michael's explanation is far clearer than paragraph 1.1.10 in the Membership Handbook and as a result he asked that the paragraph be simplified.

13.7. Membership Training:

Margery Taylor was invited to read out the question submitted by the Mijas Costa branch:

'With the budgetary restraints that every department has to work under, effective training of volunteers is, at times, not possible within a reasonable time frame. This delay sometimes leads to the member losing interest.
Would it be possible to create, or make available, distance learning packages for all suitable courses.
This would give the interested member almost instant access to, at the very least, background information regarding the role they are willing to fulfil. These courses could easily be distributed as a downloadable file via the RBL website or as an attachment to an email.
Pre-course learning could also prepare the member to more readily absorb

knowledge/information when they are eventually able to attend an arranged course – thus making these courses more cost effective.

The anticipated time for availability of the first courses was ***August 2011***

Overseas Branches are getting very mixed signals with regards to Training – On one hand we are told :-

Membership training:- The contribution that volunteers make to the Legion is critical to our success. We have a comprehensive training programme in place to ensure volunteers receive the relevant training they need to fill volunteer appointments at branch and county level.

We are also constantly being told that Overseas is no different to the UK – same Charity, Same Handbook, Same Charter and yet. I have recently received emails, in my role of DTO, containing the following paragraph:-

"It is established that members of Overseas Branches and Districts are usually unlikely to benefit from many UK-based Membership Training courses as they will not cover overseas specific issues."

To my mind overseas specific portions of the main membership training courses, whilst they have to be acknowledged, are very minor to the general governance of branches

Can we please know if we will receive the support that is necessary to train our members to be effective volunteers for TRBL throughout the ***world.***

Beverley Harrison replied that she had covered many of the issues in these questions in the Overseas Forum Training Update. In short:

- On-line material is available through L&D, although as the Legion has been through a big change, so material is being rewritten as a whole and that material needs to match the needs of the member. The training team are currently looking at Branch Secretary training that would probably be downloaded as a presentation.
- Membership Training is addressing local delivery by "Train the Trainer" trained Members and who may deliver agreed training.
- Membership Training responds to requests for training that will be carried out overseas when that is the cheaper option, in all but a few cases eg: Members already in UK.
- RBL Training is undergoing total review and the team will always endeavour to meet the identified training needs of any district / county (or Branch) requesting the training

LOMAS (Legion Online Membership Accounting System) Training is dependent upon the progress of the LOMAS Project –

- LOMAS now available as distance learning package for Overseas branches (although new branches cannot be entered onto the system until this summer as we need to go through year end with the number registered now.)
- IE refresher will very shortly be available as an on-line update and test.
- On-line RBL Induction training will be available, as the training team are reviewing a distance learning package already in hand with HR Learning &Development that is aimed at volunteers, so it will need Membership

modules added. A previous Membership version which was almost finalised, had to be amended significantly in view of Pathway for Growth and was no longer suitable, hence they have had to start from scratch.

13.8. Statement of Account forms:

Peggy Wyatt was invited to read out the question from District Spain North.

'Each March/April Vanessa Dean sends a poppy pack containing a blank Statement of Accounts form to all Branch PAOs. However this form needs to be completed in November, normally by the Treasurer and often these forms get lost in the intervening period. Is it possible to consider sending to Branch Secretaries, the Statement of Accounts form again, in September/October along with form SC22a and welfare analysis (together along with supporting instructions for completion)?'

Kayleigh McFeeters explained that unless Charles Byrne has any objections she is happy to send out the Statement of Accounts form and their instructions with the SC22 as and when she emails them to the Branches in September.

Item 11 Date/Place of Next Forum - Chairman of the Forum

The Chairman again thanked the Delegates for attending and wished them a good conference.
The date and place of the next Forum will be Friday 15th May 2015, in Southport. The time and venue will be advised closer to the date.

DELIVERY OF WELFARE OVERSEAS
KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Legion Expenditure on Immediate Needs Grants Overseas During Financial Year 2011/12

Head Office	• Total spent including funds from other organisations: **£178,105.10** • Total Legion funds spent **£84,744.19**
Spain	• Total spent including funds from other organisations: **£85,880.15** • Total Legion funds spent: **£15,045.27**

Legion expenditure on INGs in the current financial year as at 30th April

Head Office	• £63,483.96 (£25,277.00 received from other charities)
Spain	• £42,626.58(£14,404.00) received from other charities)

- 2011/12 there was a significant drop in enquiries. From 376 the previous year to 313. The enquiries came from over 32 countries. Despite this, there has been a higher number of cases.
- In Spain there were 133 cases managed. We were able to assist with 113 and 30 were declined and referred to other organisations.
- At Head Office: 217 cases managed; 166 grants made; 51 declined or referred to other organisations.
- Came from 29 different countries, excluding Spain

Assistance breakdown by region

Western Europe (excluding Spain) – Funeral Costs, Mobility Adaptations and Aids, Medical (hearing aids and dentures), Food and Household Essentials, Maintenance Grants and Priority Debts.

South East Asia - Repatriation and Medical costs

Canada – Mobility Adaptations and Aids, Medical (hearing Aids and Dentures)

USA – Medical Costs (full, on going medical treatment) and Repatriation

Australasia - Mobility Adaptations and Aids and Medical (hearing Aids and Dentures)

Number of cases where assistance was given by country

Australia	3	Fiji	7	Malta	17	South Africa	5
Belgium	1	France	34	Netherlands	2	Sweden	2
Belize	3	Germany	24	New Zealand	2	Syria	1
Bosnia	1	Greece	1	Peru	1	Taiwan	2
Cambodia	2	Hungary	1	Portugal	2	Tanzania	3
Canada	1	India	1	Philippines	12	Thailand	10
Cyprus	10	Jamaica	2	Slovakia	1	United States	8

Trends

- Increase in number of requests for Food and Household Essentials, priority debt and travel costs (in particular to and from hospital and repatriation)
- Growth in the number of repatriations from South East Asia in particular The Philippines and Cambodia.
- Overall, between Spain and Head Office, over £50,147.77 spent on maintenance grants over 2011/12. There has been a significant increase in the number of applications we make to our Service Charity partners to provide annuities for beneficiaries who are struggling to "make ends meet" on a limited income and for whom repatriation is not a realistic option.
- There has been a sharp increase in applications for services from Civvy Street, in particular, cases from Germany from those being medically discharged.

Collaborative Partnerships

- We continue to work closely and strengthen our working relationships with the FCO (FCO Desk officers and social work advisor in London as well as the consular sections across the globe), Royal Commonwealth Ex-Service League (RCEL) and the American Red Cross (Veterans Dept). These collaborative partnerships are essential especially where there is no Legion presence.

- There has been significant increase in the number of enquiries and cases from our beneficiary community in the USA – enquiries relating to repatriation to the UK due to loss of job, bankruptcy, inability to afford on-going medical costs. The American Red Cross has been extremely supportive in assisting our beneficiaries to access the limited voluntary sector support available locally, in addition to visiting, completing our paperwork and providing moral support to our beneficiaries.

- There is evidence from our CWO (County Welfare Officer) in Spain that suggests more of our beneficiaries are being signposted to sources of local

help and are making concerted efforts to access services in Spain. The FCO partnership with the Legion and Age Concern España (ACASA) has worked hard to deliver outreach work across Spain and support us to provide Spain specific information to our caseworkers and beneficiaries. In particular it is through the hard work and support of our volunteer caseworkers that beneficiaries have been able to access local services. It is acknowledged, however, that whilst individuals are applying to statutory services, cut backs in local funding and the lack of resources means that some individuals are being assessed and confirmed as eligible, only to be told that there are no financial resources available to provide the necessary assistance. This is also happening within the UK and sadly is unlikely to change in the near future.