



Central News – January 2026

Membership information, updates and engagement

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Important dates	
8 January 2026	Elections nominations deadline
15 January 2026	Annual Conference registration opens
5 February 2026	Elections nominations deadline for Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland only
6 February 2026	Membership Roadshow [click to join at time of event]
13 February 2026	National Membership Awards and Sir Clive Johnstone Award nomination deadline

Register for Annual Conference 2026

Registration to attend Annual Conference 2026 in Brighton opens next week! Whether you're planning to attend as a delegate or visitor, in person or online, you can register your place from 15 January [via our website](#).

Those joining us at the Brighton Centre, 8-10 May, can expect the return of familiar agenda items including keynote speaker addresses, the Membership Forum, National Membership Awards Ceremony and more. Further agenda details will be published in March.

Find out more or register your place from 15 January via the [Annual Conference webpage](#). Registration to attend in person closes 12pm midday 23 March. Registration to attend online closes 12pm midday 6 April.

Last chance to nominate for RBL Elections 2025/26

Are you keen to play a role in the Legion's leadership? **The deadline for nominations to reach us for four Trustee roles and seven Membership Council Representative roles is 8 January 2026***. Membership Council Representative roles are open in the following areas:

- Cheshire and Merseyside
- Greater Manchester and Lancashire
- *Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland**
- South East Midlands
- South West Midlands
- West Midlands
- The Women's Section

**Nominations deadline for Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland extended to 5 February. Please [see here](#) for further information.*

If these roles appeal to you, act quickly! [Watch the election briefing](#) and [read the role descriptions on our website](#). Candidates must be nominated for a role by their branch before the deadline of 8 January 2026* and will be invited to attend an assessment panel to assess eligibility before advancing to the voting stage. Successful candidates take up their positions in May 2026.

Branches are kindly reminded to hold a Branch General Meeting between 2 March and 9 April to vote for their preferred candidate. Please note Easter falls within this period.

RBL runs a robust and comprehensive election process to ensure there is transparency, fairness and integrity. Full details about the roles and election process have been shared with all branches and are [available on our website](#).

Join our February Membership Townhall

Our first Membership Townhall of 2026 is next month! Open to all members, these two-way online events will be hosted by senior membership leaders, providing the opportunity to find out more about RBL and membership matters, and ask your questions. Save this year's Townhall dates:

- [Friday 6 February, 12.30pm – 2.00pm](#) [click to join at time of event]
- Monday 20 April, 6.00pm to 7.30pm
- Thursday 23 July, 12.30pm to 2.00pm
- Saturday 17 October, 10.30am to 12.00pm

You can ask questions live or [pre-submit them](#). If you're unable to attend, you can always watch the recording afterwards to see what was covered and the response to any questions.

Do you aspire to be an RBL leader in the future?

Following its success in 2025, our Aspire programme is set to return this year.

Aspire is designed to develop and equip leaders-in-waiting who may, in the future, be elected to leadership positions such as branch and county officers, Membership Council representative or trustee.

Gwent Vice Chair Andrew Doody, who completed the course in 2025, describes Aspire as "life changing" and something that any member could benefit from, no matter their age. Learning about



Nina Villa, Executive Director of Membership, and Andrew Doody, Gwent Vice Chair

his own leadership skills, strengths and where he could develop further, he says, gave him "the knowledge to put things right in the correct way".

He remarked that by the second module he experienced several moments when he thought "yes, I know where I'm heading and I'm equipped with the tools to achieve that".

To anyone thinking of applying, Andrew stated: "There is so much to learn that is rewarding for both your professional and personal life. The instructors are amazing and the friends you make from across the Legion family allow you to network across the country at the drop of a message."

Applications for Aspire are welcome from members of all branches, counties / districts, the Women's Section and overseas branches. If you have any questions, please contact the Learning & Development team at L&D@britishlegion.org.uk.

Created to identify and develop talent from our membership, **Aspire is open to all members** – please let your County Chair know if you are thinking of applying, for their information. There are 15 places available with sessions taking place over two weekends: 10-12 July and 13-15 August. The application process is open now via the QR code on the right.



Linking with schools to connect in a “genuine two-way exchange”

As engaging young people is important to our new strategy, linking in with schools to ‘Connect’ and ‘Remember’ can be an excellent way to achieve this. Not only can it help to raise awareness of the RBL, it can also be a rewarding experience – as Rushden Branch Chair, Jake Baker, and Branch Vice Chair, Paul McKay, recently discovered.

Over Remembrance, Jake and Paul each delivered sessions at an academy for pupils who are either excluded from mainstream schools or attend for additional support. Aligning sessions to the curriculum, they linked remembrance, respect, resilience and service with life lessons.

Sharing some of their own Armed Forces experiences, they also helped students to understand how Remembrance is relevant today. Examples of teamwork, service and overcoming adversity also reinforced lessons about resilience, responsibility, and belonging.

“The students were open, honest and deeply interested,” says Paul. “It was a genuine two-way exchange – we learned from them as much as they learned from us.”

Jake says the sessions were also important because many young people do not know what Remembrance means or what the poppy symbolises. “The reward for me is not only bringing to life the reasons why we remember,” he says, “but also awakening their [understanding] to what our forefathers sacrificed during WW2 and what our service personnel have done and continue to do to this day.”

Jake and Paul found students were impressed by hearing about operational experiences and the branch plans to extend the programme to include youth organisations and cadet groups.

Lynne Baker, Rushden Branch’s Branch Secretary – a former teacher and school governor – says: “Face to face engagement is key.” She suggests linking in with schools through remembrance services, assemblies, visits by veterans and RBL representatives, or by encouraging collective schoolwork through awards and certificates; and finally, marking important anniversaries throughout the year and not just during the poppy appeal fortnight.

When asked what tips they had for delivering talks to young people, the branch offered the following:

- Capture attention early with an opener that is interesting and relevant to your audience.
- Consider age appropriateness and relevance – tailor your talk to the setting.
- Liaise with teaching and safeguarding teams to understand any potential challenges.
- Agree with staff on how to manage any disruptions or challenging behaviour.
- Representation matters — where possible, include veterans of different backgrounds.
- Uniforms and medals help presenters stand out and reinforce authenticity.

Thank you for reading! The next edition of Central News is due to be published Tuesday 3 February