



ARMY

HEADQUARTERS ROYAL SIGNALS

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RECORD OF DECISIONS AND ACTIONS OF THE 81st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) OF THE ROYAL SIGNALS ASSOCIATION, LONDON, 14TH MARCH 2026.

Present:

Brig (Retd) CJ Thackray
Col (Retd) DA Craft
Col E Swift ADC
Col E Bruce
WO1 (RSM) A Jarman
WO1 L Pell
Mr W White
Mr K Bates
Mr H Ferguson
Mr M Nevill (Virtual)
Mr T Holyoake
Mr G Marsh
Mr P Osment
Mr R Jephcote
Ms G Pettigrew
Mrs T Muers
Mrs L Cooper
Association Branch Representatives

Chair
Corps Sec / Gen Sec
Corps Col
Dep Corps Col
Corps SM
Corps SM Des
Area 1 N
Area 1 S
Area 2 N
Area 2 S / NI
Area 3
Area 4
Area 5
Area Scotland
Area Wales
Ops Mgr / Mtg Sec
RSA AA
Various

In Attendance:

Capt W Skirrow
Sgt S Newens

255 (Spec Ops) Sig Sqn
255 (Spec Ops) Sig Sqn

Discussions / **Decisions** / **Actions**

Item 1: Introduction

1. The meeting opened with the Chair reflecting on his first six months in post, expressing gratitude to those branches he had been able to visit for their hospitality and warm welcome. He acknowledged those he had not yet visited and committed to engaging with them in future.
2. The Chair highlighted a key strategic concern regarding the ageing membership and declining branch numbers. It was noted that members are not being replaced at the same rate by younger veterans, which resulted in reduced branch sustainability and closures. This trend posed a long-term risk to the Association's national footprint and its ability to identify and support veterans in need.
3. Branch representatives had been tasked with providing data on membership and closures to

enable further analysis and the development of proposals for the Corps Executive Board including building a stronger relationship with the serving Corps.

Item 2: 80th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Signals Association

4. The Ops Mgr presented the minutes from the 80th Annual General Meeting.

a. Decision – The minutes from the 80th Annual General Meeting were unanimously agreed as an accurate representation of the previous meeting.

5. The Ops Mgr covered the actions from the previous meeting.

a. Decision – All actions from the previous meeting had been covered in the HQ reports or had been marked as closed.

Item 3: General Secretary's Report

6. The General Secretary provided an update on key personnel changes, including the appointment of Lieutenant General Paul Griffiths CB as Association President after the departure of Dame Sharon Nesmith, who continued to serve as Vice Chief of the Defence Staff. Changes within the Central Committee were noted.

7. The Assistant General Secretary post remains vacant due to a civil service recruitment freeze, and members were asked to be mindful of reduced staffing capacity. Liz Cooper was welcomed to the team in a supporting role.

8. The appointment of Brigadier Jake Thackray as Chair and Gwen Pettigrew as Wales Area Rep was confirmed by the Central Committee in September, in accordance with the decision at last year's AGM, and were formally confirmed by the AGM members. Gratitude was expressed to those who had temporarily filled the positions, Barry Doughty as Wales Rep and Brig David Hargreaves as interim Chair.

a. Decision – Brig Jake Thackray as Chair, Ms Gwen Pettigrew as Wales Rep.

9. The ongoing challenge of declining branch numbers and membership was discussed. While some positive engagement initiatives were highlighted, it was agreed that further action is required. Work is underway to develop proposals aimed at strengthening the relationship between serving personnel and the retired community, with the intention of improving engagement and long-term sustainability.

10. Website - Changes to the Association's website were outlined, including the removal of outdated branch pages. Branches were encouraged to maintain their own digital platforms and link these to the central website. Future communication improvements were also being explored, including the potential use of a Military App to enhance engagement across the Association.

11. Branch Standards - The storage and preservation of branch standards was discussed, particularly following branch closures. While local arrangements remain the preferred option, a central solution at the Garrison Church in Blandford was being explored. Branches were encouraged to retain standards for Remembrance activities where possible.

[Secretary's Afternote: The General Secretary has now confirmed, following a meeting with the

Blandford Garrison padre, that Standards that could not be 'laid up' locally could be brought to the Garrison Church and laid up there.]

12. Benevolence - A slight reduction in benevolence cases was reported, though concerns remained that some individuals may not be coming forward for support. Assistance continued to be delivered via SSAFA and the Royal British Legion. There is no cap on benevolence support, and branches were encouraged to actively identify and refer individuals in need.

13. Project Noel 2026 - Project Noel would take place from 27–29 November 2026 in Liverpool. The event remained open to serving personnel, veterans, and families, and branches were encouraged to promote attendance. The Master of Signals had expressed an interest in attending this year.

a. Action – Branches to encourage attendance at Project Noel.

14. Engagement with Serving Units - It was recognised that branches with access to a physical base, such as an Army Reserve Centre, tended to be more sustainable. However, access was inconsistent and often dependent on local relationships.

15. The Chair outlined plans to formalise engagement between serving units and branches to ensure a more consistent and structured approach.

16. Daniel Millan (Sale branch), who was also a SSAFA caseworker, raised the issue of further clarification on what benevolence grants can be used for including items other than white goods and furniture. He suggested that a list of acceptable items could be produced and given to SSAFA and the RBL which would help caseworkers in understanding what assistance the Corps could and couldn't give. He also raised the issue of standard bearer training.

17. The Gen Sec confirmed that advice regarding benevolence should be directed to the Grants Co-Ordinator, Linda Sizeland but confirmed that SSAFA and the British Legion conduct the case work for the charity. He noted that providing a list might be useful and agreed to discuss it with Linda.

a. Action – HQ R SIGNALS to create a current list of approved benevolence items.

18. John Mumford (Berkshire Branch) confirmed that a standard bearers handbook had been produced but that it was waiting to be published. He also offered to train standard bearers when required.

19. The RSA Chaplain stated that standards were blessed and wherever possible should be laid up in a church when no longer used. He offered to conduct a service at Corps Weekend to lay up the standards if approved by the Garrison Church.

20. Bob Cook (York Branch) raised a concern that engagement between branches and units was largely one-directional, with branches initiating contact. The Gen Sec confirmed ongoing discussions with the serving Corps and an intention to formalise relationships between serving and retired communities, understanding that two-way communication was required.

21. Anita Keen (East London Branch) highlighted the importance of having a permanent meeting home but identified a lack of such facilities as a contributing factor to branch decline. She asked if a request was made to Corps HQ for support in securing access to military or reserve facilities for branches would that be considered. The Dep Corps Col acknowledged the value of such arrangements and encouraged leveraging personal connections and informal engagement before pursuing formal routes e.g. Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations (RFCA). She also suggested that going down a formal route would likely come with charges being levied on the Branch.

22. The Chair acknowledged that current relationships between branches and serving units were inconsistent and personality-driven but expressed his desire to propose formal links between branches and geographically aligned units.

a. **Action – HQ R SIGNALS** to assist in identifying and facilitating local connections upon request if informal relationships failed to secure permanent meeting places.

Item 4: General Secretary's Financial Report

23. Benevolence Support – Benevolence expenditure in 2025 had decreased by approximately 7% over that seen in 2024, reflecting a wider trend across the sector. He noted that the Army Benevolent Fund had reported an annual reduction of around 20% in individual cases. The Gen Sec expressed that benevolence remained the highest priority for both the charity and the Corps Executive Board. He reiterated that there was no cap on benevolence support and it would not be changed despite wider financial pressures.

24. Subscription Income (Serving Corps) – Subscription income had increased with approximately 80% of the serving Corps contributing via the Day's Pay Giving Scheme, a higher percentage compared to many other cap badges. The introduction of a new "opt out" system for new joiners replaced the previous "opt in" approach, with early results showing a 100% sign up rate in the past three months.

25. Donations and Legacies – Income from donations and legacies had significantly increased, with figures doubling. The growth was partly attributed to a substantial legacy, alongside continued fundraising efforts by branches. The Gen Sec expressed appreciation to branches for their contributions, with encouragement to continue and expand fundraising activity.

26. Investment and Income Financial Pressures – Investment income had declined in the past six months and was below expectations which created some financial pressure across charity expenditure. The RSTL board was actively reviewing the situation and exploring solutions. The Association was well represented on the RSTL board, which ensured oversight and input into future decisions.

Item 5: Operations Manager's Report

27. Events and Engagement – The Associations battle rhythm remained consistent, continuing to support member attendance at events and supporting families on the passing of loved ones. It was highlighted that the Cenotaph parade had massively increased in popularity, with 160 applicants for 60 places. Members advised that attendance would be rotated to ensure fairness.

28. Digital Presence and Social Media – Continued growth across the platforms was confirmed, with over 1200 followers on Facebook, and 1300 on Instagram. Social media was proving effective for outreach and engagement, a recent SOS network post reached over 16500 viewers and resulted in 10 new volunteers to the scheme. Branches are encouraged to submit content to further promote activities and attract new members.

a. **Action – Branches** to submit content to Ops Mgr for social media posts.

29. Supporting Our Signallers (SOS) Network – The pilot training course was held in Stafford with 10 volunteers in attendance. The course covered mental health awareness, resilience, and information on signposting to relevant charities. Feedback gathered had been positive, with plans to refine and expand delivery.

30. Approximately 150 volunteers were currently registered, with focus now ensuring they were properly trained.

31. Data Protection Compliance – Data agreement forms would be issued to branches. Completion and return of these forms **was mandatory** to ensure compliance and protection of personal data.

a. Action – Branches to return agreement forms to Ops Mgr.

32. Social Media Conduct – An increase in negative and personal comments had been observed on social media platforms. Members were asked to report inappropriate or abusive behaviour to branch admins or HQ R SIGNALS. It was confirmed that the Digital Communications team were authorised to block individuals engaging in cyberbullying.

33. Cliff Springer (East London Branch) advised that Royal British Legion (RBL) members may get priority places in the Cenotaph Parade and they could then choose which contingent to march with. The Ops Mgr confirmed that there were several non-branch affiliated places available for members who were not successful in the Association ballot, available through the RBL.

Item 6: Corps Update

34. Introduction and Overview – The Corps Col had been in post for six months, focussing on familiarisation with Corps HQ and its functions. Corps HQ continued to deliver key outputs including personnel policy, career management, recruitment, and training in partnership with Royal School of Signals.

35. The Corps operates within Standing Joint Command (commanded by the Master of Signals), with strong leadership and support structures in place. He confirmed the continued contribution from the Royal Signals Institution (RSI) and the Association.

36. Key Visits and Engagement – He noted the following:

- a. Visit to 22 Signal Regiment highlighted innovation in communications and adaptation to modern warfare, with an exercise taking place in underground bunkers.
- b. International engagement included a visit to SANCOM (Saudi Arabia), strengthening partnerships and capability development.
- c. Attendance at the RSI Dinner, which recognised Corps engineering achievements. He highlighted the growth of the institution which resulted in the dinner's future move to London Guildhall.
- d. Visit by the Princess Royal to 3 Divisional Signal Regiment which showcased operational capability and innovation. It also included a recognition event for Cyril Booth who was awarded the Legion d'Honneur for his D-Day service.
- e. Exercise Mercury Glacier Host and the Corps Ski Championships generated strong industry engagement and charitable fundraising.
- f. Participation in Defence Cyber Marvel (a global cyber exercise) which demonstrated significant international presence.

37. Partnerships and Events – Strengthening relationship with the Worshipful Company of Information Technologist, including mentorship opportunities.

38. Positive recruitment trends, with increasing numbers entering training and 14 new officers selected to join in April. Growth reported in trades and expansion of Queens Gurkha Signals, with an 8th squadron planned.

39. Corps Development and Initiatives – Opening of the new Cold War exhibition at the museum. While the development of a new Corps vision and strategy was planned to enhance influence and growth.

40. Reserve Forces Update – Reserve component remained healthy while supporting regular counterparts within an integrated model. Recruitment remained positive, particularly among junior officers. There was a focus on transfers between regular and reserve service with continued engagement with cadets and the Association. Reserve units continued to support operational commitments globally.

41. There was an increased focus on cyber roles within both regular and reserve forces. Reserve units actively engaged in Defence Cyber Marvel and cyber related tasks. Specialist units delivered outputs in areas such as data governance, artificial intelligence and risk assessment.

42. Training, Readiness and Activities – Emphasis was on operational readiness, with training focussed on mission-specific tasks during annual camps. Continued participation in sport and wider activities continued, often integrated with regular units. Ongoing support to STEM and recruitment outreach initiatives also continued.

43. Extension of service age for reserve soldiers to 60 years, which aligned with officers, was seen as a positive step in retaining skills and experience within the Corps.

44. The Corps SM confirmed that the Mercury Knowledge event that Area Reps usually attended had been scaled back due to lack of accommodation and attendance would now be limited to 120 personnel. However, Area Reps may still be able to attend for the day only.

45. The standard bearer competition at last year's Corps Weekend was well attended, showing improvement from 2024. There was a strong desire to maintain and increased participation at this year's event. Participants could be guided and coached on the day enabling rapid preparation.

a. Action – Branches to encourage their standard bearers to participate in the competition.

46. The meeting marked the Corps SM's final meeting in role and WO1 Lee Pell was introduced as the incoming Corps SM. They would hand over at Corps Weekend on the 20th June 2026. The Corps SM expressed her sincere thanks for the support and encouragement received during her tenure and wished continued support to her successor.

47. Capt Will Skirrow and Sgt Newens from 255 (Spec Ops) Signal Sqn briefed the meeting on the squadron's latest activities, highlighting its specialist role supporting the Special Operations Brigade. This generated a number of questions from the audience. The Chair thanked them both for their wonderful brief.

Item 7: Matters Arising

48. Awards - A total of 40 Long Service and 3 Honour Awards were granted by the Central Committee over the last twelve months. Awards granted in the last six months are detailed below:

40 Year Awards

*John Chinchin - Brighton
Rob Dyball – East London
David Lambert – Middlesex
Roberta Harrison- Northern Ireland
Mark Harrison – Northern Ireland
John Lucas – Northern Ireland*

*Robert Foote – Northern Ireland
Keith Smale – Northern Ireland
Peter Whitfield – Northern Ireland*

50 Year Awards

*Steve Brisk – Liverpool
Alex Daley – Liverpool
Marjorie Heatley – Liverpool
John Hudson – Liverpool
Peter Jervold - Liverpool
David Chrystal – Northern Ireland
Noel McBride – Northern Ireland
William Ogden – Northern Ireland
George Cook – Northern Ireland*

60 Year Awards

*Tony Jacklin – Birmingham
Joe Long – Northern Ireland
Jon Waters - Liverpool*

70 Years Awards

Jimmy Lister - Cardiff

75 Year Awards

Michael Stanger – Leeds and Scarborough

Honour Awards

*Robert McSeveny – Scarborough
Keith Parsons - Scarborough*

Item 8: Any Other Business

49. A representative from the Royal Signals Radio Amateur Society noted that a formal report from their organisation was not included within the AGM. It was suggested that future updates could be beneficial, particularly in light of the ongoing security environment and the potential risks associated with amateur radio usage. Concerns were highlighted on communication security, specifically the continued use of legacy military equipment such as Clansman and Larkspur radios by amateur operators. It was noted that, despite Ofcom regulations, there may be instances of informal use on frequencies still allocated to the military. The possibility of obtaining a report from Cole Block to provide clarity on amateur radio activity and its influence on wider Corps communications was discussed. The response indicated that engagement with the group does take place periodically and further liaison would be considered.

50. Discussion then moved to engagement with the National Memorial Arboretum. Concern was expressed by Phil Abbott (Bristol Branch) that the 35th anniversary commemoration of the First Gulf War had not been widely communicated across the Corps, despite a significant presence from some units and attendance by dignitaries including the Kuwaiti Ambassador. It was noted that there had been no formal Corps representation or broader awareness, in contrast to more recent

publicity surrounding Iraq War commemorations. In response, it was clarified that communication regarding such events is typically received via organisations such as the RBL, and that there was no direct or routine engagement with the Arboretum beyond the Corps' own annual event.

51. Issues surrounding branch charitable status and banking arrangements were raised. Some branches had experienced banks imposing charges or requiring formal charity registration numbers. It was reiterated that while branches operate independently, they acted in support of the Royal Signals Charity. Branches were advised to present this position to their banks, supported by an official letter confirming the Charity's status and registration number. It was noted that acceptance of this documentation varied between banks. Alternative banking options, including the Co-operative Bank, were highlighted as potentially more accommodating, particularly where charge-free accounts are offered.

a. Action – HQ to provide a letter for branches explaining the charitable nature of their work for use in gaining charity accounts.

52. A formal vote of thanks was proposed and supported for Steve Lockwood, Asst Gen Sec, in recognition of his significant contribution to the Corps over many years.

53. Further appreciation was expressed by members for the improved communication output from HQ staff during the past year.

54. A presentation was delivered by a representative of the All Arms PRI Shop, who outlined the availability of customised merchandise and its financial benefit to the charity. Members were encouraged to utilise and promote the platform, as a percentage of all sales was given to the charity. Additional support services, including branding, design and production of bespoke items, were also highlighted.

55. In closing remarks, the Chair added his formal thanks to Steve Lockwood for his outstanding service, as well as to the outgoing Corps SM for her leadership and contribution. A welcome was extended to her successor. Appreciation was also given to the Regimental Headquarters team for the successful organisation of the event.

56. Finally, gratitude was expressed to all members and volunteers across the Association for their continued commitment and efforts in supporting the Royal Signals community, particularly through ongoing welfare, administration and branch activities. The meeting concluded with the marching out of the national standard.

Item 9: Date of Next Meeting

a. Decision – The date of the next Annual General Meeting is 13 Mar 27.

T C Muers
RSA Ops Mgr
(Original Signed)

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