
RAF Regiment Heritage Centre

Manager's Report & Forward Plan 2025–2026

Friday 2 January 2026

1. Introduction

The year 2025 has been the most active and productive period for the Heritage Centre Volunteer Team (HCVT) since its establishment in 2012. The RAF Regiment Heritage Centre (RRHC) continues to serve as the permanent home of the growing RAF Regiment Heritage Collection (RAFRHC), showcasing the Corps' history, identity, and cultural legacy.

Significant progress has been made across collections, digital systems, financial processes, and visitor services. As we look to the medium term, our focus remains on strengthening the Centre's credibility, accessibility, and long-term sustainability.

Across the Charity (FoRRHC), the HCVT, and partner organisations, four priorities underpin our direction:

- Advancing the development of the Collection—especially the archive—towards Arts Council Museum Accreditation.
- Strengthening partnerships with organisations such as the Centurion Fund (CF), the RAF Regiment Association (RRA), and the Association of RAF Regiment Warrant Officers' and SNCOs' (ARRWO&SNCOs).
- Expanding the Centre's digital presence, including ecommerce and online engagement.
- Supporting key RAF Regiment commemorations, milestones, and Corps engagement activities.

2. Current Position

Collections and Storage

The RAF Regiment Heritage Collection is distributed across two main sites:

- **RAF Regiment Heritage Centre (RRHC):**
Primary exhibition galleries, document archive, and clothing collection.
- **Hardened Aircraft Shelter (HAS):**
Reserve collection, Ground Based Air Defence (GBAD) display, and bulk storage.

Archive and Documentation

Decades of periodic management turnover (Service) left the archive with multiple, inconsistent cataloguing systems. In 2025, a new bar-coded location-tracking system was introduced and is now being meticulously cross-referenced with legacy catalogues. This structured, methodical approach is already delivering measurable improvements in control, accuracy, and accessibility.

To support professional museum standards, the MODES database—widely used across UK museums—has been acquired and is now being populated with physical artefacts. This system provides improved identification, tracking, and governance, and allows the Centre to meet compliance requirements linked to weapons, vehicles, and other controlled items.

Clothing Collection

A major legacy donation in 2020 significantly expanded the size of the clothing collection, exceeding storage capacity at the time. While much progress has been made—including the sale of non-RAF Regiment items—further surplus stock has been identified to release space and generate income. Funds from these sales will be used strategically to acquire items that fill identified gaps in the uniform collection.

Financial and Commercial Operations

Income continues to be generated through donations, surplus sales, and the shop (onsite and online). Improved financial reporting this year has led to enhanced stock management and more streamlined commercial processes.

Volunteer Capacity

The Centre's success remains heavily dependent on volunteers, many of whom are retired and therefore have variable capacity. While morale remains strong, the team is overstretched. Additional volunteers are essential to meet museum-standard expectations in areas including visitor engagement, conservation support, commercial operations, and facilities management. Ensuring the team enjoys their work—rather than feeling burdened—is critical.

Visitor Trends

Visitor numbers have shown consistent growth over the past three years, reaching **over 1,750 in 2025**. Whilst a large percentage of visitors are serving personnel and their families due to the Centre's on-base location, there has been a notable increase in public engagement, driven in part by positive coverage from a historian on YouTube.

Special interest groups—including the Morgan Owners Club, Rolls-Royce and Bentley Owners, and Blind Veterans UK—continue to visit, alongside repeat visits from local schools. However, school and Cadet engagement requires additional investment due to funding challenges.

Regular opening hours remain **Tuesdays and Wednesdays (0900–1530)**, but the Centre accommodates larger groups during weekends and evenings to meet demand.

3. Objectives for the Next Three Years

1. **Achieve all foundational measures required for Arts Council Accreditation.**
 2. **Enhance the visitor experience** across interpretation, storytelling, and accessibility, ensuring that we cater for all interest types (Toe Dippers, Paddlers, Swimmers and Deep Divers).
 3. **Strengthen Corps connections**, improving engagement with senior officers and enhancing the Centre's role within the RAF Regiment family.
 4. **Improve financial sustainability** through donations, ecommerce, and diversified income.
 5. **Develop a long-term volunteer strategy** to stabilise and grow capability.
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4. Strategy and Key Measures

Objective 1: Accreditation Foundations

Key measures include:

- Expanding donation routes to demonstrate reliable, sustainable income.
 - Increasing the volunteer team by **25% per year**.
 - Establishing clear ownership, governance, and accountability structures for RAFRHC.
 - Improving footfall recording and analysis to understand visitor groups and trends.
 - Demonstrating robust progress in collections care and conservation procedures.
 - Strengthening volunteer training and workforce planning.
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Objective 2: Improve the Visitor Experience

Actions include:

- Engaging professional conservators to support artefact repair and display enhancement.
- Developing a standardised storyline and training package for guides.

- Enhancing the RAF Regiment family narrative (CF, RRA, ARRW&SNCOs) throughout the galleries.
 - Upgrading the Conference Room IT system with CRF HQ support.
 - Adding personalised human stories to each room—beginning with the Battle of the Bulge and Cpl A. Forsyth.
 - Completing the Bransby story installation in the Medal Room.
 - Transforming the Crete display using interactive lighting to improve visitor understanding.
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Objective 3: Strengthen Corps Linkages

Key actions:

- Establish a formal reporting chain from Trustees through the Manager to the CRF, with a scheduled reporting cycle.
 - Plan confirmed annual dates with Training Wing to avoid ad-hoc arrangements.
 - Invite the most senior officer to serve as Patron to promote wider senior engagement.
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Objective 4: Enhance Financial Sustainability

Planned actions:

- Continuous review and improvement of merchandise, with a focus on higher-quality items.
 - Expansion of RAF Regiment–related book offerings to position the Centre as a primary research hub.
 - Identification of duplicate or erroneous artefacts suitable for sale or exchange.
 - Achieving annual sales of **£25,000+** at a **minimum margin of 20%**.
 - Establishing a donations plan targeting **£15,000+** annually.
 - Digitising and publishing Basic Gunner pass-out photographs to increase website traffic and online engagement.
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5. Volunteer Impact

5.1 Contribution to Collections and Archives

Volunteers have led the digitisation of the document archive and supported systematic improvements to the clothing and reserve collections. They contributed directly to refurbishment work, mechanical repairs, and artefact research—representing an essential resource for the Centre’s development.

5.2 Gallery Development

Volunteer expertise significantly influenced the redesign of key displays, particularly the Crete exhibit, enhanced through external specialist collaboration. Their work strengthens interpretation, presentation, and overall gallery quality—bringing the Centre closer to Accreditation standards.

5.3 Operational and Commercial Support

Volunteers and Bookkeeper have been central in:

- ecommerce order fulfilment,
- postage management,
- stock control, and
- merchandise review.

Their work supports the Centre’s stable **20% sales margin** and ensures efficient operations despite minimal paid staffing.

5.4 Strengthening Community and Corps Links

HCVT members reflect a broad cross-section of the RAF Regiment community—including veterans, serving personnel, families, and local supporters. Their continued engagement ensures the Centre remains a vibrant link between the Corps, its heritage, and the public.

5.5 Future Volunteer Development

To meet forward-plan objectives, volunteer numbers must grow by approximately **25% per year**. Planned actions include:

- Broadening recruitment pathways,
- Enhancing induction training and role-specific development,
- Expanding CPD opportunities through MDSE, and
- Continuing to professionalise the team’s appearance and standards.

Volunteers remain the Centre’s greatest asset, ensuring RAF Regiment heritage is preserved, interpreted, and shared with authenticity and pride.

5.6 Management

The Curator, who served for 13 years, has recently transitioned into a research-focused role. As a result, day-to-day management of the RAF Regiment Heritage Centre is currently being delivered as a secondary duty by a serving Warrant Officer in a separate ADC post. This arrangement provides continuity in building management, inventory custodianship, volunteer coordination, and ensures a military point of contact for all RAFRHC matters.

However, the workload associated with this role routinely requires 20–28 hours per week, which is not sustainable as the Centre continues to expand. Key considerations for the coming year include:

- The previous secondary-duty management model—abandoned a decade ago—remains unviable given the current and projected workload.
- Identifying whether a suitably experienced retired individual is available and willing to commit the necessary time on a voluntary basis.
- Assessing whether the FoRRHC has the financial capacity to fund a dedicated management post.
- Exploring whether an alternative military staffing solution is feasible.

Looking ahead, the Centre will also require a deputy role to support workload distribution and ensure continuity of leadership. Both positions must be resourced within the next year to avoid a capability gap in this specialist area.

6. Financial Overview & Resource Requirements

FoRRHC reported the following for the Charity Commission return:

Income: £89,316

Expenses: £53,517

Assets & Investment Purchases: £29,714

Net of Receipts: £6,085

Members' Fund Comparison:

- 2022–23: £61,208
- 2023–24: £55,708
- 2024–25: £61,793

Volunteer labour—averaging weekday openings, graduations, Corps events, Station events, and courses—represents an equivalent value of **£90,389.38 per year**, excluding evenings, weekends, NI, or pension costs.

6. Summary

The RAF Regiment Heritage Centre achieved its most productive year in 2025, with significant progress in collections management, digital systems, and visitor engagement. Volunteer contributions continue to be the Centre's greatest strength, delivering substantial professional value and operational capability, but the current management model is unsustainable as workload grows.

Strategic priorities for the next three years include achieving Arts Council Accreditation, enhancing visitor experience, strengthening Corps links, and improving financial sustainability. These goals require increased volunteer capacity, targeted investment, and a sustainable leadership solution.

8. Recommendations

- Approve the **2025–2026 Forward Plan** and associated spending.
 - Endorse the volunteer growth and training initiatives.
 - Support continued investment in collections care, digital systems, and gallery improvements.
 - Maintain momentum towards achieving Arts Council Accreditation.
 - Identify a route to securing a sustainable leadership position and deputy.
 - Support financial sustainability through merchandise, donations, and online engagement.
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WO M MacDonald MBE

RAF Regiment Heritage Centre Manager



This document should be reviewed alongside the following documents:

1. Independent Examiners Report on Accounts
2. Charity Commission Annual Accounts
3. Financial overview and theoretical rates of pay at minimum wage.
4. SWOT Analysis 25.



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

RAF Regiment Heritage Centre			1168904	CC16a
Annual accounts				
For the period from	Period start date 01/04/2024	To	Period end date 31/03/2025	

Section A Income & Expenditure

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Income					
Sales - internet	18,039	-	-	18,039	15,520
Sales - shop	24,895	-	-	24,895	24,589
Sales - shipping/postage	2,701	-	-	2,701	1,626
	-	-	-	-	-
Donations	43,681	-	-	43,681	6,759
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	89,316	-	-	89,316	48,494
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	89,316	-	-	89,316	48,494
A3 Expenses					
Purchases	31,766	-	-	31,766	31,613
Shipping/postage	1,950	-	-	1,950	1,496
Packing materials	224	-	-	224	370
Exhibition & displays	2,157	1,026	-	3,183	6,458
Maintenance of displays	1,468	-	-	1,468	1,987
Archive Department costs	336	-	-	336	548
Conference room refurbishment	8	-	-	8	229
Printing/stationery	534	-	-	534	268
Computer & website costs	1,604	-	-	1,604	1,816
Repairs & maintenance	973	-	-	973	222
Cleaning & canteen	526	-	-	526	321
Subscriptions	216	-	-	216	302
Mileage expenses	80	-	-	80	-
Promotional expenses	255	-	-	255	-
Sundry costs	861	-	-	861	275
Bank charges	-	-	-	-	21
Card machine charges	562	-	-	562	418
PayPal & Ebay charges	579	-	-	579	475
Accountancy	5,700	-	-	5,700	5,450
Insurance	990	-	-	990	394
Depreciation	1,701	-	-	1,701	1,331
Sub total	52,491	1,026	-	53,517	53,994
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Tools & equipment	7,414	-	-	7,414	-
Exhibition items	22,300	-	-	22,300	-
Sub total	29,714	-	-	29,714	-
Total payments	82,205	1,026	-	83,231	53,994
Net of receipts/(payments)	7,111	- 1,026	-	6,085	- 5,500
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Members funds last year end	53,081	2,627	-	55,708	61,208
Members funds this year end	60,192	1,601	-	61,793	55,708

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Barclays	33,884	1,601	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds (agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	33,884	1,601	-
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	Shop Till	1,159	-	-
	PayPal control	2,245	-	-
	Clover card	-	-	-
	Stock	32,786	-	-
	Debtors	97	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	Tools		11,469	6,615
	Exhibition Items		22,300	22,300
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
	Accruals	Unrestricted	9,178	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

RAF Regiment Heritage Centre

On accounts for the year
ended

March 31, 2025

Charity no
(if any)

1168904

Set out on pages

3-4

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended March 31, 2021

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Susan Drummond

Date:

26/11/2025

Name:

S.E.S. Consultancy Limited

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

Chartered Accountant

Address:

48 Jermyn Avenue, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP32 7LJ

Section B**Disclosure**

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.