

Strategic Plan

Looking Forward to the Next Five Years



Members have some ski-biking fun on the slopes of La Plagne, France (2018)



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Luke Sinnott training with the Graeae Theatre Company for a role in *This Is Not For You*

Introduction

The First World War led to the birth of almost 18,000 charities, of which around 10 still exist. **Blesma is one.**

Blesma, The Limbless Veterans is a national charity for those who have lost limbs or the use of limbs, or an eye, or permanent eyesight, speech or hearing, in service or as a result of service in Her Majesty's Forces, and for ex-Service men and women who lose limbs or eyes, or lose the use of a limb through a traumatic incident after service. While the majority of its Members are ex-Service men and women, there are a number who are still serving. The Association also assists the dependants of its Members, and in particular their Widow(er)s. The Association is governed by its Articles of Association and Rules, which were adopted on 23 June 2016.

Purpose

This is a five-year rolling plan, owned by the Board of Trustees. It is reviewed annually in step with the Board's annual cycle of governance so that Blesma, with all its Members, is confident that it is doing all it should, resourced accordingly. The current horizon extends to a position in 2023, but this will be a milestone as the Plan's horizon moves forward year by year.

The purpose of the Plan is to:

- Align internal development and improvement agendas with external influences, and be better able to anticipate an ever-changing environment.
- Synchronise policy, resources, programmes and projects.
- Bring coherence to external and internal communications.
- Enable agility, manage risk for greater impact, and reduce vulnerability to turbulence and scrutiny in the charity sector.
- Achieve an end state where Blesma, with all its Members, is confident that it is doing all it should, resourced accordingly.

Board Governance Standing Instructions address responsibilities and duties of the Board, and will not be repeated but referred to. Review and renewal of the Board is a continual task.

The Articles of Association and Rules were revised in 2016. The Objects of the Charity were unchanged. It is not envisaged that decisive points within the Plan will result in options being placed before the Board that require another revise of the Articles in the near future.

The Blesma Mission

Blesma is
here to assist
its people to lead
independent and
fulfilling lives.

The Strategic Intent¹

The Board resolves to have Blesma be the principal Association for the Service disabled of limb². Its defining purpose is to assist its people to live independent and fulfilling lives. It will be distinguished by a fellowship of shared experience. It will exploit knowledge of the experience. It will inspire. It will be about the celebration and realisation of potential. At the same time, it will bring comfort. It will be there for life.

In fulfilling strategic intent, it is essential that the Association concurrently protects and exploits its unique core strength. This strength is the membership of shared experience, continuing with the values of service³.

1. On 20 April 2017 the Board undertook a strategic review of Blesma in order to position the Association for the future.
2. Membership is defined in the Articles of the Association and Rules.
3. Selfless commitment, courage, discipline, integrity, loyalty, respect for others, both as Members and as an Association.



Philip Bailey enjoys life on the ocean waves during the 2018 tall ship adventure to Jersey

Influencing Factors

There are external and internal factors that must be taken into account:

Change in the Charity Environment

- Greater public demand for universal standards, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness⁴.
- Sharper regulatory scrutiny, particularly upon fundraising and safeguarding⁵.
- An expectation of needs being met, but advantageous benefits beyond need are to be guarded against.
- Austerity in the Public Sector amidst greater demand and expectation of delivery will lead to pressure for Blesma to do more for our Members who are in complex and vulnerable situations.

Change in the Service Charity Sector

Help for Heroes and the Royal British Legion dominate the public consciousness as the charities supporting Service personnel⁶.

The withdrawal from major ground operations in Afghanistan has reduced visibility of the Armed Forces amongst the British public, and extremely strong altruistic support from the public of the recent past is anticipated to wane, with other good causes assuming higher profile. This will contribute to an increasingly difficult fundraising environment.

4. Baroness Stowell, first major speech, Chair Charity Commission, 16 April 2018.

5. Regulating Fundraising For The Future, September 2015, Sir Stuart Etherington (Chair).

6. The RUSI Journal. 17 Mar 2014. Public Awareness of UK Veterans' Charities.

Lord Ashcroft's *Veterans' Transition Review*, published in February 2014 and accepted by Government in part aims to "encourage, through Cobseo, greater co-operation, collaboration and consolidation in the Armed Forces charity sector". This was reinforced in his Third Follow Up Report, October 2017.

Establishment of the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall, the Defence component being funded by the charity sector and Ministry of Defence, will impact upon the relationships between the injured, Defence, Service charities, and health authorities, particularly if the National component comes to being.

Change in membership

There are (as at 01 October 2018) 2,930 Members:

Associate membership may increase with demographic change and longer life expectancy. The current trend is upward, but membership overall will decline to below 2,700 in 2022, a reduction of 8.2%, notably due to the passing of Members resulting from World War II, unless the Association's Objects change significantly⁷.

Blesma needs to be relevant to all its Members noting that the expectations of the new generation have been raised significantly, and that strains upon the Local Authority and National Health Services provision will cause increasing distress to the most vulnerable⁸ and most seriously injured.

7. Towers Watson Actuary – Population Projections. 19 August 2013.

8. Association of Directors of Adult Social Services reports in 2018 that only a fifth of those needing care get help from councils.



Stuart Roberson on set during a photoshoot for the WWI commemorative issue of Blesma Magazine

Operating Principles

Blesma will be:

A connected Association – through effective communications Blesma will connect Association to Member, Member to Member, and Member to any relevant other(s). It will promote inclusivity and a better understanding of individual and Association issues using its knowledge, expertise, and connections to act. Blesma is a democracy; a charity of Association for its Members, and its future relevance, structure and modus operandi will eventually have to be decided by its Members.

Cooperative and collaborative – understanding we do not have the resources to do it all, nor do we have all the expertise. For example, we are not fully aware of the complex needs of those Members who suffer from comorbidities. A large number of Members have diagnoses in categories such as psychological disorders, diseases of the nervous system and sense organs, and diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue. Not all are diagnosed prior to the transition into civilian life, and we must work with authorities and other charities.

Understanding – through its actions and research, Blesma will continue to retain its deep knowledge of Service-related and other injury in order to deliver best possible support to its Members, as individuals and collectively.

Member supporting Member – the method of choice in execution, whenever possible, is for Members to have charge. This draws on the Association's centre of gravity, promoting the Intent directly, reinforcing the connected Association principle.

Balanced and sustainable – Blesma will run on a business model that is able to fulfil the Trustees' Intent in the longer term. It will also be able to adjust to a changing environment and have contingencies in place to act quickly in unforeseen circumstances, such as another conflict.

Compliant – Blesma will, of course, adhere to all statutory and regulatory rules, and all professional best practice, accepted and emerging.

Operating Concept

Blesma will focus on meeting the needs of its Members. It will do this by developing its role as the specialist Service Charity dedicated to those serving or ex-Service personnel who have lost limbs or the use of limbs. It will know all its Members individually and will strive to understand and meet their needs to live independent and fulfilling lives. It will be recognised as the authoritative voice in its specialist field.

OUR GOAL, FOR EACH MEMBER, IS:

- The Member believes and engages in, and is inspired by, the fellowship of shared experience (Connectivity)
- Government and Administration responsibilities to the Member, on Service, health, and disability accounts, are exercised completely and correctly (Security)
- The Member is overcoming disability and is positive about their life (Identity)

AND THE MEMBER VALUES BLESMA FOR:

- Caring
- Being there for life and relevant to independence and fulfilment
- Listening to the Member's story, never alienating
- Striving to learn more, always positive
- Offering support and guidance, never patronising
- Putting their needs first

- Being the expert Service charity on living with limb loss and loss of use of limb

Blesma is not a charity provider that only has beneficiaries; it is an Association with the membership (contributors and beneficiaries) as its centre of gravity. There is to be the most efficient use of resources to provide optimum connectivity within and without the Association. This provides the platform upon which security and identity needs are communicated and delivered. Blesma will therefore run four lines of operation:

Security – wellbeing, the physical and mental essentials. For our Members this means managing disability, health, where they live, looking after themselves, finance, how they feel, dignity, and knowing Blesma is able to be their advocate.

Priorities:

- Confirm the full extent of Members' needs, refresh constantly, ensuring relevance, determining partnerships with other charities to meet need in full. Adopt *Caring and Coping: The Family Perspective on Living with Limb Loss* ⁹.
- Understand all Government and Administrations' position and provision for limb loss and loss of use, and be geared to act on judged gaps.
- Deliver the Blesma position on later

life care and the most vulnerable, focusing upon any lack of or distressing statutory provision.

- Encourage and support Members to engage with the community in which they live.

Identity – respect and realisation of potential. Individual and collective programmes and events provide meaningful activity, challenge, a social life, the sharing of experience, promoting confidence and self-belief, opening new horizons and exploring potential. Employment can provide security directly of course, but moreover, it promotes identity and a feeling of worth. The link between Security and Identity is strong.

Priorities:

- Bring Members’ Activity programmes, including high-end events such as the Paralympics, to a position of prominence.
- Extend the programmes to meet the widest possible range of individual membership and whole Association needs, for example; the Making Generation R Programme¹⁰.

Connectivity – internal community communications and external outreach communications. Open dialogue within the Association, Member helping Member, and then reaching out to all those agencies, authorities and communities that can help deliver security, identity

and resources are critical to fulfilling the strategic Intent. Being connected is the foundation of the Association’s proposition to its Members; it is why Blesma exists.

Priorities:

- Build an inclusive, positive and crisply responsive communications network, exploiting the latest communication technology but not to the exclusion of those unfamiliar with the digital age.
- Grow voluntary support across the network, at the hub of communities, and reaching out, including best use of Members’ skills and commitment, especially to reinforce the impact of the Activity programmes.

Resourcing – people, finance, knowledge and training. The people are contributing Members, volunteers and supporters, and staff. Finance includes fundraising. Knowledge is critical to a specialist charity such as Blesma, and its maintenance and development key to our relationships and the proposition for our Members. It includes research and databasing.

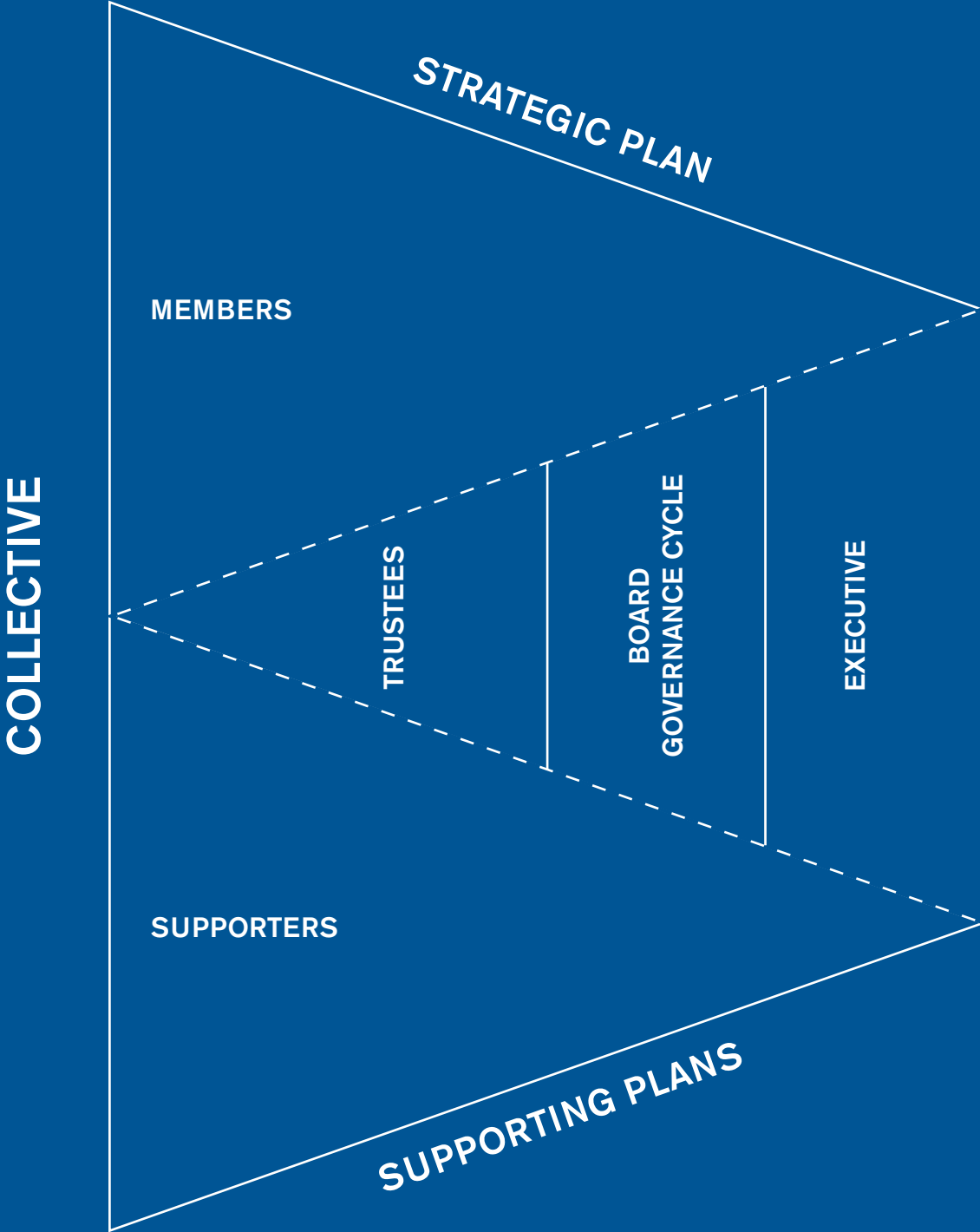
Priorities:

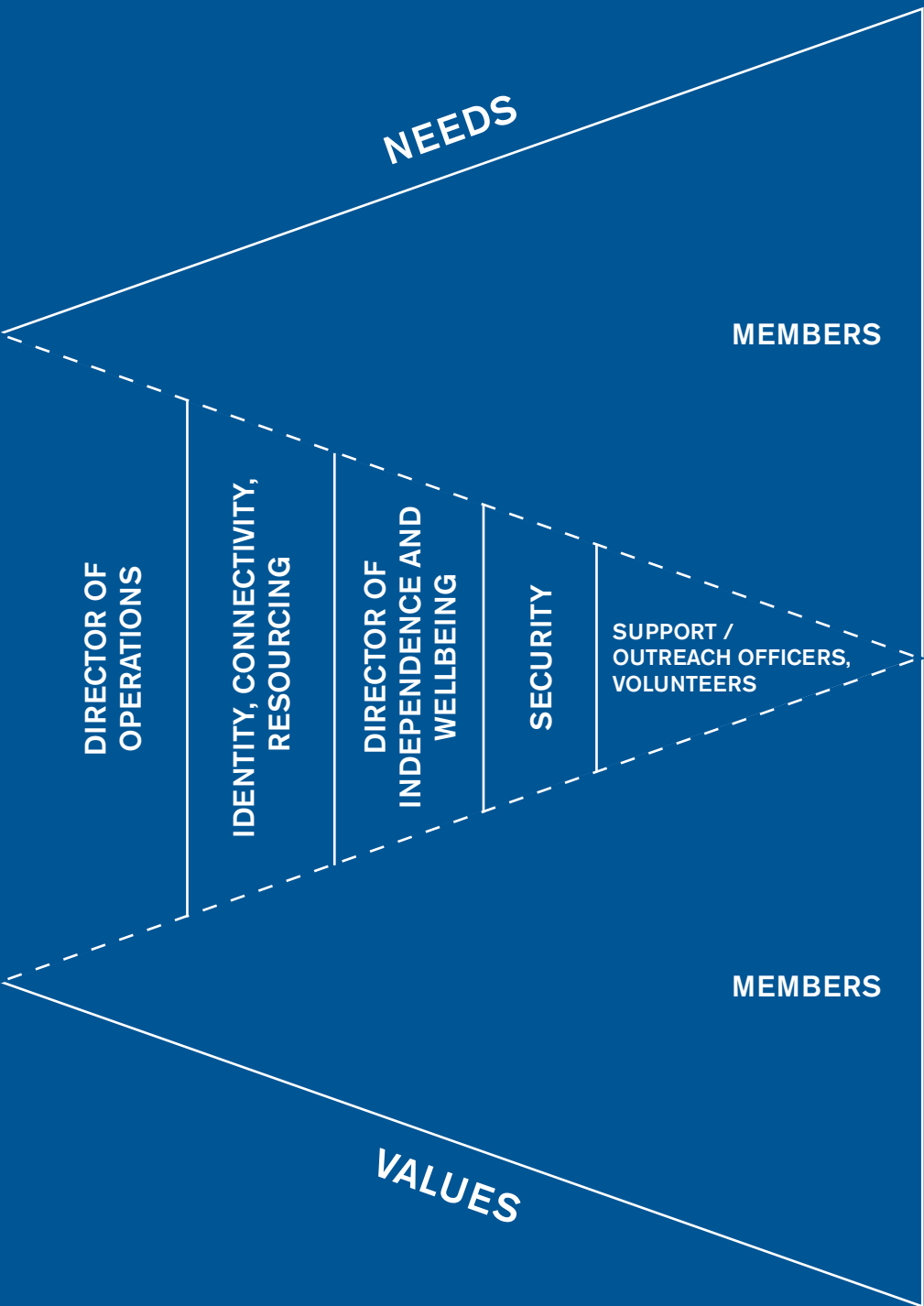
- Develop further a solid, efficient, bespoke fundraising net that is aligned with the Association’s need, character and values.
- Embrace the highest number of those eligible to be Members.
- Ensure a safe, efficient and welcoming Blesma environment, with all due regard for vulnerable people.

9. Engward, Fleuty, Fossey, June 2018.

10. The workshops and assemblies inspire and motivate young people, while also giving injured veterans a purpose and positive role in their local communities. With minimal input from teachers, the sessions are effective in helping students develop strategies to deal with everyday issues; building resilience.

The Relationships Across Blesma





Delivering the Priorities

In five years' time, Blesma should be in the following position:

- The Board is confident that Blesma, with all its Members, is doing all it should, resourced accordingly.
- The Board has the resources (finance, time and expertise) to be able to consider a number of options for the future direction of Blesma.
- The Board is convinced that strategic and operational risks are managed appropriately.
- The following is delivered to Members, to their satisfaction:

LINE OF OPERATION	PRIORITY	DELIVERING TO THE MEMBER
<p>Security</p>	<p>Confirm the full extent of Members' needs, refresh constantly, ensuring relevance, determining partnerships with other charities to meet need in full. Adopt <i>Caring and Coping: The Family Perspective on Living with Limb Loss</i>.</p> <p>Understand all Government and Administrations' position and provision for limb loss, and loss of use, and be geared to act on judged gaps.</p>	<p>Timely individual access to a Support Officer.</p> <p>Immediate access to Chadwell Heath staff by phone/email, and a follow-up visit if necessary.</p> <p>Personal introduction to authorities and partner charities for support on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental health - Housing - Employment - Mobility <p>Grant (financial) assistance (health and wellbeing, disability, independence at home).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Continued Opposite</p>

LINE OF OPERATION	PRIORITY	DELIVERING TO THE MEMBER
Security	Deliver the Blesma position on later life care and the most vulnerable focusing upon any lack of, or distressing, statutory provision.	<p>Access to counselling services.</p> <p>Access to financial advice.</p> <p>'In person' support on limb loss and loss of use treatment, compensation and social care provision to ensure prescribed standards are met fully, consistently and fairly.</p> <p>Blesma support individually and collectively to correct anomalies, deficiencies and the unfair.</p> <p>Needs driven support for the appropriate provision of care and social support.</p>
Identity	<p>Bring Members' Activity programmes, including high-end events such as the Paralympics, to a position of prominence.</p> <p>Extend the programmes to meet the widest possible range of individual Member and whole Association needs, for example the Making Generation R Programme.</p>	<p>Opportunity to partake, support and lead in activities of interest.</p> <p>Communication of participation to inspire and motivate fellow Members.</p> <p>Access to physical, mental and social engagement-focused activities to unfold new horizons, potential, confidence and self-respect.</p>
Connectivity	<p>Build an inclusive, positive and crisply responsive communications network, exploiting the latest communication technology but not to the exclusion of those unfamiliar with the digital age.</p> <p>Grow voluntary support across the network, at the hub of communities, and reaching out, including best use of Members' skills and commitment, especially reinforcing the impact of the Activity programmes.</p>	<p>A connected Outreach pilot programme.</p> <p>Regular magazine, bulletin, website and social media news.</p> <p>Introduction to fellow Members and civilian user groups.</p> <p>Opportunity to lead and support activities.</p> <p>Opportunity to volunteer support to fellow Members.</p> <p>Opportunity to volunteer support to civilian limb loss and loss of use groups, and other charities.</p>
Resourcing	<p>Construct a solid, efficient, bespoke fundraising net that is aligned with the Association's need, character and values.</p> <p>Embrace the highest number of those eligible to be Members.</p> <p>Provide a safe, efficient and welcoming Blesma environment, with all due regard for vulnerable people.</p>	<p>Clear rationale for fundraising and the distribution of funds to meet need.</p> <p>Access to the above, through life, for new Members.</p> <p>Safe, respectful, rewarding conditions for Members, staff, volunteers and supporters.</p>

How we Deliver

The following matters are to be reviewed by the Board of Trustees and conclusions will influence how Blesma conducts itself:

- Apportionment of Charity reserves to deliver this Plan, including:
 - Long-term assistance for the most vulnerable
 - Later life care in concert with national Government policies
- The shape of fundraising
- The new Defence Rehabilitation Centre
- Direct Skeletal Fixation pilot programme
- The Veterans’ Medical Funds
- Future reorganisation of National Health Services, including mobility/limb services and rehabilitation
- Evaluation of the Blesma Outreach pilot programme, including take-up of the Blesma proposition, and the role of volunteers
- Structural efficiency, including Head Office

Finance

The budget should be sustainable. Blesma should always have the 'space' (time and finance) to pursue a range of options for the future of the Association, at any point in time. Free reserves are to be maintained at a level that permits this position, thus resourcing the ability to pursue a change of strategic direction in a deliberate, constructive fashion, and be ready for quick action if a future conflict arises and membership increases again.

The Association takes a long-term view. It is committed to being there for Members, for life, and this means being able to assist for decades to come. Reserves are apportioned so that the most severely injured veterans should always be safeguarded.

Specifically, income sources will be diversified so there is balance in dependence. Mindful of projected membership profiles, the financial plan is modelled on assisting those injured who will have to manage their condition for decades to come. The five-year horizon is continuously rolled forward in financial projection.

The investment policy for the Association's funds contains the objective to have an optimum level of income commensurate with operational requirements to meet the needs of Members, whilst maintaining the real value of the investments over the longer term.

Governance and Control

The Governance cycle for the Board of Trustees is Fiduciary and Strategy (April), Performance and Risk (June), Strategy Review and Programme Proposal (September), Programme Approval (November). Essentially, this translates as a progression of clearing the end of previous year accounts, confirming strategy and the five-year stance, reviewing mid-year performance and risks, reviewing strategy and directing the next year's budget, and then confirming the next year's intentions and budget.

Performance measurement of this plan will be focused upon outcomes, outputs and inputs. Outcomes are demonstrated using quantitative and qualitative data to produce metrics annually. Output performance is depicted in a 'traffic light' presentation of the priorities noted within each line of operation. The 'lights' are dictated by defined indicators. This presentation is produced for each Board meeting. Input performance is judged by adherence to the directed budget and forward projection. The Finance and Investments Sub-Committee plays a key role here as per Governance Standing

Instruction Number Nine. Outcomes, outputs and inputs are linked to each other in the annual metrics.

The Executive will implement the Board's direction. Governance Standing Instruction Number Nine sets out financial powers of delegation to the Chief Executive, and other Standing Instructions provide guidance on the conduct of responsibilities. The Chief Executive will report to the Board on progress and supervise staff, making recommendations for structural changes.

The Operations Director will deliver Identity, Connectivity and Resource lines of operation, and the Director of Independence and Wellbeing will deliver the Security line of operation. Feedback on performance is to be sought from the membership on specific services and events routinely.

However, the Annual General Meeting and the Members' Weekend are essential components in Members' influence on the Association, individually and collectively.

Compliance and Recognition

In accordance with operating principles Blesma will be forward leaning on emerging Charity Sector legislation and regulation in keeping with good governance and transparency, especially towards Members.

Recognition of best and novel practice brings much benefit to a charity, to the beneficiaries and to public perceptions, and the Chief Executive is to regularly review opportunities to achieve recognised standards and awards, bearing in mind best use of limited resource.

Endorsed by the Board of Trustees

28 September 2018

Blesma

THE LIMBLESS VETERANS



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Blesma, The Limbless Veterans
British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association

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