

UPDATE



October 2019

Brigade Council - Swansea 2019

What will Brigade UK look like in 2033?

'A continuation of the past 13 years falling membership pattern would see the UK numbers fall from 50,000 to 20,000 at the 150th Anniversary of the founding of the organisation in 2033'

This was the main message delivered by Graeme Reekie of Wren & Greyhound, the external consultant recently tasked with supporting the Brigade Executive with the preparation of a new Strategy running from 2020. The report of his early findings is at the end of this document.

Responses to his online survey, one-to-one interviews and sessions with focus groups in May & June this year highlighted to him, that a continuation of the Growth, Quality & Voice initiative will be key to addressing the situation.

A majority of delegates who responded to questions in a poll during the conference agreed that an *'urgent response is needed to the current crisis'*. Fairly mixed views were received on whether *'it is too late for gradual change'* and *'that continued decline is acceptable if quality improves'*.

Worryingly, a 1991 Mission Statement and Action plan was put in place to address the same issues and had, in effect, not been followed through. Subsequent plans since then have continued to fail to meet the agreed objectives. An organisational 'resilience to change' was one finding from the survey.

Survey respondents earlier in the year highlighted Programme Resources, Recruiting, Training & Development of existing and new Leaders/Volunteers and Membership & Growth as the most important areas to address over the next 3-5 years.

There is no doubt that a concerted effort from all parts of the organisation to address the issue is needed, with the key being the quality of everything we do to provide and support the delivery of the best experience for our young people.

The time for action is now and we need to work together to identify how this message is delivered to Companies through District, Battalion and Regional/National initiatives.

The upcoming Battalion Council meeting on 12th November will give Leaders the opportunity to discuss how we address the current position. Please join us on the night to ensure a wide representation as we work together to develop a plan that everyone can be part of as we look toward a positive outcome.

This meeting will be held in the Baird Suite at Hampden Park, there is ample parking. Catering is being arranged, we would ask that you advise us in advance if you plan to attend.

Jim McVean
October 2019

Strategy and sustainability: early findings from the independent review

Introduction

In the six months from April to September 2019 we carried out an independent review of The Boys' Brigade's most recent Strategic Plan to inform the development of the next one. A representative range of people from all levels of BB UK and Republic of Ireland took part, with over 2400 survey responses, 19 interviews and three focus groups taking place. This short paper presents a summary of the findings for sharing across the BB network.

Graeme Reekie

Director, Wren and Greyhound Limited
September 2019

Achievements and future priorities

Achievements from 2013-2018 included sustaining the organisation's passion and commitment; the under-11's programme; developing training and resources; the mentoring programme in Wales; OBM being rolled out and used; and the Raising the Bar campaign.

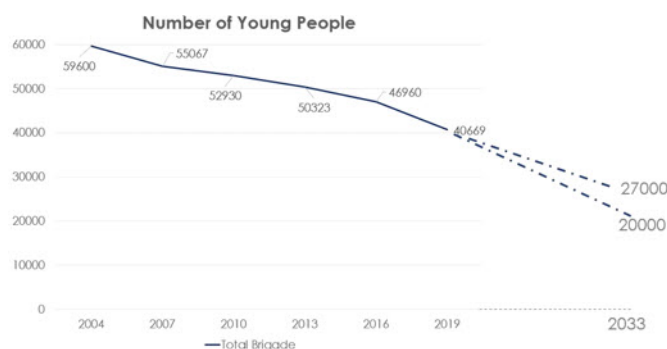
The most important priorities for the next three to five years identified were:

- Programme resources (56% of people)
- Recruiting and developing leaders/volunteers (40%)
- Membership and growth (39%)
- Retaining a focus on faith (31%)
- Raising profile (28%)

In summary, the recent focus on quality, growth and voice has begun to make a difference, but there needs to be more of it. I recommend keeping these priorities, with some suggested rebalancing of their focus – see below.

Growth

With a 32% decline in the number of young people (19,000) across the country in the last 13 years, the membership situation is now critical. If this trend continues over the next 13 years to the BB 150th anniversary, numbers will be between 20,000-27,000 (currently 40,600).



Urgent action is needed. Overall there is a commitment to change, and for this to be as inclusive as possible. But many people believe that if there are leaders or companies that aren't able to adapt, they could be left behind.

'We try to please too many people rather than just saying, this is what we're doing.'
(Survey)

Quality

In the survey, less than half of people (48%) rated provision at a Company level as 'high' or 'very high' quality. 88% of survey respondents were in agreement that improving quality is the key to the organisation's future.

It was suggested that quality can be improved by focusing on:

- Leaders – they are the people who really influence quality.
- Programme ideas and resources that make leaders' jobs easier.
- Training – e.g. companies and battalions pooling resources and providing training for all leaders, including regular refresher training.
- Battalions supporting companies through visits and practice sharing.
- Standardisation – people cherish their freedom and autonomy, but some standardisation is still needed – and achievable.

'Companies need to see more involvement from Battalions/districts. Battalions and districts need to offer companies and leaders more support and advice' (Survey)

'If we are to succeed and improve quality, there has got to be a standard that we can get to, a quality mark.' (Survey)

Voice

Growth and Quality are easy to understand. Voice was less clear, but just as important. It helps to support:

- Relevance: listening and responding to the voice of young people.
- Recruitment and retention: young people spreading the word with their peers
- The next generation of young leaders.

An unexpected theme to emerge in the survey and interviews was succession planning. Many senior leaders don't feel they have people around them who can step up and take over, so they don't move on. But if they don't move on, the next generation won't be able to step up. Addressing this Catch 22 situation is vital for the organisation's future. This could be done by taking a two-pronged approach to succession planning: supporting senior leaders to plan for their futures and retaining, then building the capacity of, the next generation of leaders.

'The moment you get a role...you should be thinking of who is going to replace you and you should be mentoring people to have the skills to take over' (Interview)

We are preparing a full report on the review which will be presented to the Executive in October. For now, two final quotes succinctly sum up the challenges facing the organisation – and give clues to how they can be addressed.

'We are an organisation in crisis, and if we don't change what we are doing drastically soon, we won't exist. That is the harsh reality.'
(Focus group)

'If you can stick to the foundation of what an organisation stands for, there are a lot of years left in the organisation.' (Interview)

Events & Activities

Glasgow Remembrance Parade 2019

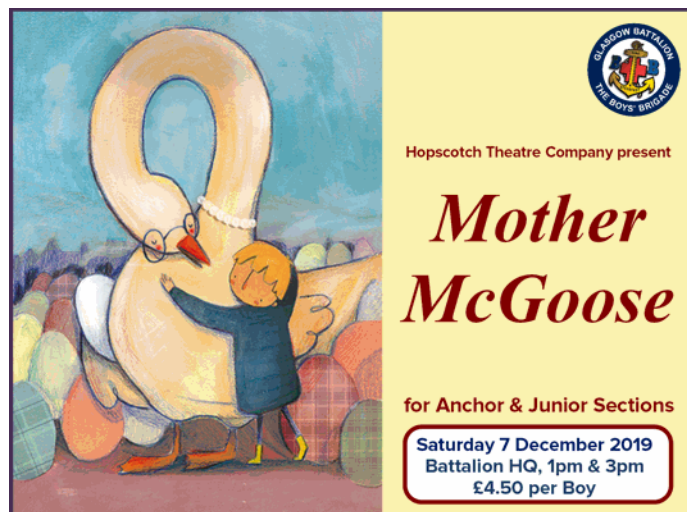
For a number of years Glasgow Battalion has led the Voluntary Uniformed Youth Organisations contingent at the Remembrance Parade at the Cenotaph in George Square.

Along with the Girls' Brigade, Girlguides and Scouts we are asked to provide a Guard of Honour for the main Cenotaph party at the start of the event and form a line outside the City Chambers at the march past of detachments of Servicemen, Ex-Servicemen and Civilian Services. One of our young men is tasked with laying the Battalion Wreath during the ceremony.

Over the last few years we have struggled to maintain healthy numbers on the day. Last year saw our party reduced to 4 Boys and one Leader where usually we are requested to provide around 16. This was, in part, due to local churches organising special commemoration events to recognise the Centenary of the end of the Great War.

We are looking for Companies to support this important event in the calendar on Sunday 10th November. Those attending, we have widened the age range from S2 to S6, are required to report to Cochrane Street at John Street in Glasgow City Centre for 9:45am. Along with the other organisations we are responsible for the distribution of Orders of Service to the members of the public attending and then, as mentioned earlier, participate in the formal commemorations. The parade usually concludes at around 11:30am.

I do understand that Companies will have local church services arranged, and some have difficulties encouraging attendance at these events, but would ask that if you are able to encourage one or two young men to join with the Battalion group they will have the opportunity to experience the city wide commemoration whilst representing the Brigade in this important act of remembrance. Names of those wishing to participate should be sent to the Battalion office by Friday 8th November 2019.



Forthcoming events

October

- 22 Board Meeting
- 26 Anchors Lego Morning
Building Your Skills Course No 1
- 27 Eastwood Founders Day Parade

November

- 2 Youth Leader Training Part 1
- 3 Youth Leader Training Part 2
- 10 Remembrance Sunday
- 12 Battalion Council
- 15 Championship Drill Competition
Premier Squad Drill Competition
- 17 Skills for Queen's Badge Course No 2
- Media Skills
- 21 Badminton Championships * tbc

December

- 7 Anchors & Juniors Pantomime
- 8 Carol Service



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