



RNA Fundraising Paper – Draft

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Executive Summary

The Royal Naval Association (RNA) delivers significant charitable impact through the 7 Cs: companionship, community, connection, compassion, care, commemoration, and celebration across the naval family. The Association is membership-led and Shipmate-driven and does not levy member subscriptions. Its core financial support is provided through grant funding from the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC), which is both valued and fundamental to current and future delivery.

This paper not only seeks to mitigate financial risk but also sets out a clear case for developing proportionate, values-aligned fundraising activity alongside existing grant funding. This approach will help strengthen long-term resilience, reduce reliance on a single income source, and better align the generosity of Shipmates and Branches with the RNA's charitable purpose

The paper:

- Confirms that Branches are already active and generous fundraisers, with significant sums donated annually to a wide range of charitable causes
- Demonstrates that fundraising can be undertaken in ways that reinforce, rather than dilute, the RNA's culture and ethos
- Draws on internal contributions previously considered by National Council and on established practice across comparable military and veteran membership organisations.

This is not a fundraising strategy or operational plan, but it aligns with Central Office's 5-year plan (as briefed to NC members). It is intended to support informed discussion and provide assurance that future fundraising activity can be ethical, realistic, member-led, and appropriately governed.

- **1. Purpose of this Paper**

This paper sets out the case for strengthening and broadening fundraising activity within the Royal Naval Association. It is intended to support informed discussion and decision-making by National Council, Areas, Branches, and Central Office staff, and individual Shipmates where applicable.

The paper seeks to:

- Explain why fundraising is increasingly important for the RNA
- Set out what is currently known about fundraising behaviour and practice within the Association
- Demonstrate that appropriate, values-aligned fundraising approaches exist
- Provide confidence that any future fundraising activity can be proportionate, ethical, and consistent with the RNA's culture and purpose

This paper does not constitute a detailed fundraising strategy or an operational delivery plan.

2. Why Fundraising Matters for the Royal Naval Association

The Royal Naval Association is, first and foremost, a membership organisation built on commitment and service, underpinned by the 7 C's. While the RNA does not currently levy member subscriptions, it fulfils a wide and growing charitable role across the naval community.

The Association is presently primarily supported through grant funding from the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC). This support is highly valued and fundamental to the RNA's ability to deliver for Shipmates and the wider Naval family.

However, as with many long-established charitable organisations, the RNA operates in a changing environment:

- Costs are increasing
- Expectations of accountability and demonstrable impact are rising
- Funders increasingly expect resilience and income diversity

The wider naval charitable sector is becoming increasingly crowded and, at times, fragmented, with elements of duplication. While the Association's commitment to the RAND process will help address this, competition for funding is significant and every donated pound is increasingly contested. Current levels of charitable giving to the RNA (c.16%) remain comparatively low and are unlikely to be widely understood, indicating a clear need for stronger communication and engagement.

Fundraising is therefore not presented as a replacement for grant funding, nor as a departure from the RNA's culture. Instead, it represents a complementary mechanism that can:

- Strengthen financial resilience
- Reduce reliance on a single income source
- Support investment in charitable activity

- Better align the generosity of members and Branches with the Association's charitable purpose
- Make more effective use of existing income streams and opportunities, including the RNA Lottery, digital platforms, retail activity, legacy promotion, events, and partnerships such as Army v Navy fixtures

Done well, fundraising should enhance the Association's independence while remaining firmly rooted in its naval ethos and member-led identity.

As this area develops, there is also a recognition that appropriate capacity within Central Office will be required, including consideration of a dedicated grants and fundraising function, whether delivered through a single combined role or separate posts.

3. What We Know at This Time: Declared Branch Donations (2025)

Analysis in this paper draws on declared Branch donation data for 2025, as submitted through Branch Annual Returns. Focusing on a single, recent year provides a clear snapshot of current giving behaviour.

The data shows that Branches continue to give generously to a wide range of charitable causes.

Key observations (2025):

- Total declared Branch donations: £57,699.67
- 16% (£9,054.43) donated to the Royal Naval Association
- 16% (£9,130.22) donated to the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC)
- 12% (£6,870.52) donated to Sea Cadets
- 51% (£29,208.02) donated to other charities

'Other' includes all non-RNA charities listed in Annual Returns.

This evidence does not indicate a lack of generosity or engagement. On the contrary, it demonstrates that Branches are already active fundraisers, making thoughtful decisions about where they believe their support has the greatest impact.

4. Fundraising Fit with RNA Values and Culture

Fundraising within the RNA must reflect the Association's character: service-based, non-commercial, and grounded in comradeship.

Existing internal thinking demonstrates that fundraising need not conflict with these values. One example is the working paper prepared by Shipmate Peter Godwin, which explored the concept of a nationally recognised fundraising and engagement day (variously described as

‘Navy Day’, ‘Flag Day’, or ‘Anchor Day’) as a focus for visibility, recruitment, and income generation.

That proposal is not presented as policy, but as an illustration of values-aligned fundraising that:

- Emphasises remembrance and maritime heritage
- Encourages collaboration across the wider naval family
- Supports local, member-led fundraising activity
- Focuses on visibility and public understanding

It demonstrates that fundraising can be framed as an extension of service rather than a commercial exercise.

The full paper is included at Appendix A for reference.

5. Income Opportunities

This section draws on reflections previously shared with National Council as part of the RNA Funding Strategy Vision (2025–2030) review, prepared by Shipmate Stephen Elliot, supported by Shipmates Lance Higgin-Young, and Peter Nicholls, incorporating earlier work by Shipmate Pete Chivers. That review paper was previously considered by National Council and is included as a supporting document at Appendix B.

This thinking is also informed by established practice across comparable military and veteran membership organisations, where sustainable fundraising typically develops alongside core grant income through a strong national narrative, visible local engagement, and proportionate, member-led delivery.

Key principles emerging from this work include:

- The importance of a mixed-model funding approach
- Realism about the scale and maturity of different income streams
- A clear relationship between fundraising activity, member value, and visible impact
- Recognition that some initiatives are primarily engagement-focused rather than high-yield

Coordinated National Collections

One or two nationally coordinated fundraising moments each year can offer modest but reliable income potential alongside public visibility. Consistency of messaging, timing, and location matters more than scale.

Participatory and Community-Based Fundraising

Sponsored walks, challenges, and social fundraising events align well with member motivation when they are:

- Purpose-driven
- Easy to participate in
- Clearly linked to beneficiary impact

Linking RNA participation to established regional or national events offers a proportionate and low-risk approach. There may also be opportunities, subject to further consideration, to align such activity with wider *Thriving Together*-type themes.

Coordination, Capacity, and Timing

Reflections consistently highlight that capacity and timing matter. Fundraising activity should:

- Be limited and testable in the first instance
- Avoid placing unrealistic expectations on Shipmates, recognising that every contribution of time, effort, or resource has value
- Allow recent governance and structural changes to embed

Any future fundraising activity should be designed to support and complement any dedicated fundraising capacity at Central Office, whether current or future. Member-led fundraising and professional fundraising support are not alternatives, but mutually reinforcing approaches. Clear coordination, shared purpose, and appropriate role clarity will help ensure consistency, efficiency, and a positive experience for both members and staff.

Value and Impact

Fundraising credibility depends on the ability to clearly articulate:

- What the RNA does
- Who benefits
- How funds are used

Income opportunities that strengthen this narrative are valuable, even where immediate financial return is modest.

Practical operational examples supporting these themes, prepared by Shipmate Karen Elliot are included at Appendix C.

6. Next Steps and Engagement

This paper is intended to support shared understanding rather than to mandate action. Subject to National Council discussion, a natural next step may be for the National Chairman to formally acknowledge the role that fundraising and voluntary giving already play within the Association, and to encourage continued engagement in ways that are consistent with the RNA's values and capacity.

Such communication could:

- Reinforce the role of fundraising as a complement to existing grant funding
- Encourage participation and visibility without creating obligation
- Promote awareness of any designated central fundraising fund, supporting Shipmates and Branches who wish to donate directly to the RNA with clarity and confidence

Any future engagement should emphasise choice, transparency, and impact, recognising that contributions of time, effort, and financial support all play a vital role in sustaining the RNA community.

7. Fundraising Support Pack

To support the principles set out in this paper, without moving prematurely into instruction or obligation it is proposed that any subsequent guidance for Areas and Branches take the form of a fundraising support pack, rather than a manual or strategy.

The purpose of a support pack would be to enable and reassure, not to direct. Framed correctly, it would help Shipmates who wish to engage in fundraising to do so confidently, ethically, and consistently with RNA values, while fully respecting Branch autonomy and capacity.

Why a Support Pack (and not a manual)

A support-pack approach is appropriate because it:

- Reinforces shared values without imposing requirements
- Builds confidence rather than setting targets
- Supports voluntary engagement rather than mandating activity
- Provides clarity without constraining local judgement

This approach aligns with the RNA's culture as a membership-led organisation grounded in trust, service, and mutual respect.

What the Fundraising Support Pack would contain

A concise support pack (for example, 4–6 pages) could usefully:

- **Reaffirm RNA values and the 7 Cs**

Set fundraising clearly within the context of companionship, community, connection, compassion, care, commemoration, and celebration, positioning fundraising as an extension of service, not a commercial exercise.

- **Explain briefly why fundraising matters**

Summarise the rationale set out in this paper: complementing grant funding, strengthening long-term resilience, and aligning member generosity with RNA charitable purpose.

- **Show practical examples of what works**

Provide illustrative (not prescriptive) examples of simple, values-aligned fundraising activity already familiar to the RNA community, emphasising visibility, participation, and community connection rather than income targets.

- **Clarify basic governance dos and don'ts**

Offer reassurance on good practice, use of branding, handling of funds, permissions, and compliance so Shipmates can participate confidently without fear of 'getting it wrong.'

- **Explain how to donate to a designated central fund (if Shipmates choose to)**

Clearly signpost how Areas, Branches or individual Shipmates who *wish* to donate directly to the RNA can do so, reinforcing transparency and choice rather than expectation.

- **Signpost support and help**

Identify where advice, resources, or coordination support can be accessed whether through Areas, Central Office, or designated points of contact without creating dependency or hierarchy.

Positioning and Use

Importantly, such a support pack would be positioned as optional and enabling, issued following appropriate leadership communication, and reviewed periodically in light of experience. Its success would be measured not by uptake or yield alone, but by increased confidence, clarity, and goodwill within the RNA community.

This approach allows the Association to move forward cautiously, coherently, and in keeping with its ethos, while leaving space for learning and adaptation before considering any more structured framework in the future.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that fundraising is not alien to the RNA but already embedded in Branch activity and Shipmate generosity. It shows that proportionate, ethical, and values aligned approaches exist which can strengthen resilience while reinforcing companionship, visibility, and service.

The evidence suggests that, while positive practice already exists in parts of the Association, there is scope to better align, encourage, and support this activity so that effort and generosity more consistently advance the RNA's charitable purpose. National Council is invited to consider whether the principles and evidence set out here provide a sound basis for shared direction across the Association, and whether a concise, enabling fundraising support pack would help refine, encourage, and support existing good practice where Branches choose to engage. Any future development would remain member led, appropriately overseen, and subject to further engagement before any practical steps were considered.

This paper has also benefited from the review and constructive input of Shipmate Malcolm Little.

Appendices (Summary)

- **Appendix A:** Working Paper on Fundraising & Recruitment – '*Navy Day*' (Shipmate Peter E. Godwin)
- **Appendix B:** RNA Funding Strategy Vision (2025–2030) – Council Reflections (Shipmate Stephen Elliot, incorporating earlier work by Shipmates Pete Chivers, Lance Higgin-Young, and Peter Nicholls)
- **Appendix C:** Practical Fundraising Proposals and Coordination Model (Shipmate Karen Elliot)

Appendix A: Working Paper on Fundraising & Recruitment – ‘Navy Day’ (Shipmate Peter E. Godwin)

Royal Naval Association Working Paper on Fundraising & Recruitment

Introduction

The primary aim of this working paper is to identify a way forward for fundraising and recruitment for the RNA.

The secondary aim is to identify a method of promoting within the wider public an understanding of our maritime history, while at the same time giving a platform for Youth, Serving, Veteran Associations and the Merchant Marine to raise their own profile.

Proposal

It is proposed that a day or weekend within the national calendar be established as ‘Navy Day(s)’ and this date can be used as a fundraising & recruitment opportunity.

Date

The proposed date would be over a weekend in May. The Battle of the Atlantic is arguably the greatest contribution the Royal Navy has made to the defence of the nation. The Battle lasted throughout the Second World War however May 1943, (also known as Black May), was seen as the turning point. In May 1943 for the first time more submarines were sunk than merchant ships.

The original aim was to have the date established in the national calendar by 2023 the 80th Anniversary of the battle, but that has been overtaken by events. There is currently an annual commemoration event that takes place in Londonderry, see appendix 1. Liverpool has a major visitor attraction in the Maritime Museum, which focusses on the battle.

The Battle of the Atlantic (May) as a commemoration date has many advantages

- It involved both a military and civilian contribution
- Without its victory the war would have been lost
- It was multi-national and therefore has international possibilities
- Given the popularity of commemoration events in recent years there is an appetite with the public to recognise the sacrifice made by the wartime generation(s)
- There are veterans of the battle still alive to give first-hand accounts
- As a fundraising opportunity May is a good month with potential for outside events

Stakeholders

Obviously, the support of the Royal Navy is key to the success of the proposal however this is not intended to be a renewal of Navy Days as they were in the past. It is understood that the navy would not have the resources to open days in the dockyard. At the Confederation of Naval Associations (CONA) update 7 March 2019; it was stated by Captain Cooke-Priest Royal Navy, that the navy needs a focus to bring to national attention what the navy does, its capability and the contribution it offers to national policy and decision making. Other stakeholders would include at least:

- CONA
- This would draw involvement from the associations that are currently members of CONA and may draw in those that are not.
- The Sea Cadets
- The Merchant Navy Association
- Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) & other Maritime charities

Fundraising and awareness for organisations

For many veteran's organisations it is both difficult to fundraise and to maintain recruitment numbers. The focus of a particular day would allow maximum publicity through all forms of media.

- This would lead to the public expecting to see naval associations and charities fundraising on the day.
- The organisations would be able to plan in advance (e.g. book the entrance way of a supermarket or a stand at a public event)
- Provide associations and charities with an opportunity for visibility in their respective areas thus aiding recruitment and retention
- Potential for serving personnel to support associations and charities in their hometown areas
- Charities such as RNRMC could use the day to hold national events for fundraising (e.g. charity cycling event)
- Promote the awareness of associations and charities to veterans who may be isolated or alone and offer them potential local support

Conclusion

The establishment of a Navy Day in the national calendar would give associations & charities the focus to promote themselves and the benefits of both joining and participating in veteran activities.

Lead to renewed focus on the contribution made to the nation by our maritime history and culture.

Bring to the public attention the contribution made to the nation by the Royal Navy and other maritime organisations.

P E Godwin

NVCh, No. 8 Area NCM

Royal Naval Association

Appendix B: RNA Funding Strategy Vision (2025–2030) – Council Reflections (Shipmate Stephen Elliot, incorporating earlier work by Shipmates Pete Chivers, Lance Higgin-Young, and Peter Nicholls)



RNA Funding Strategy Vision (2025–2030) – Reflections

Summary

This summary has been developed following collaborative discussions with Shipmates Lance Higgin-Young and Peter Nicholls. Their insights and reflections have helped shape the direction and emphasis of the points outlined below.

We welcome the opportunity to explore how we can future-proof the RNA's funding model. Strengthening our ability to understand, measure, and communicate our social impact is not only key to sustaining current support but also to unlocking future funding opportunities. This review process provides a timely and valuable chance to ensure our funding approach is aligned with the expectations of modern charitable giving and impact-led investment.

1. Our Reflections on the Context

We recognise and support the need to explore a more sustainable funding model for the RNA. As referenced in our response to the reintroduction of membership subscriptions, we believe the National Council would benefit from greater clarity on the nature of the RNRMC funding arrangement including whether it is formalised, the terms of notice, and any implications for introducing fees.

While we agree that a mixed-model funding approach is likely to be the most resilient path forward, we also acknowledge that developing and implementing such a model may come with costs in both time and financial resources. These considerations, along with the current timing of major governance reforms, must be carefully weighed to ensure any transition is both strategic and sustainable.

2. Our Reflections on Continued RNRMC Support

We fully support the case for continued RNRMC funding during a planned transition period. As trustees, we understand the unique role the RNA plays in reaching and supporting members of the Naval community often in ways that no other organisation can. The examples outlined in the paper, from companionship visits to mental health support, clearly demonstrate the RNA's grassroots impact and alignment with the RNRMC's mission.

However, to strengthen this case and ensure long-term credibility, we believe there are a few areas that require further attention:

- **Internal and External Communications**

It is essential that our messaging, both within the organisation and to external stakeholders is clear, consistent, and aligned with our strategic goals. This includes how we articulate our value, our impact, and our future direction.

- **Clarity on the RNRMC Agreement**

As previously noted in our response to the membership subscriptions paper, we believe the National Council would benefit from a clearer understanding of the current funding agreement with RNRMC. This includes whether the agreement is formalised, the terms of notice, and any expectations or conditions attached to continued support.

- **Defining and Communicating Our USP**

While we know what the RNA is and does, we must ensure that our unique selling proposition (USP), the 7 C's, is clearly defined and consistently communicated. This will be critical not only in maintaining RNRMC support but also in attracting new partners and funders as we diversify our income streams.

We agree that a strategic, time-bound transition is the right approach and that a mixed-model funding strategy is necessary for long-term resilience. However, we also recognise that this may require investment in capacity, systems, and communications, and that the timing of such a shift must be carefully considered in light of ongoing governance reforms.

3. Our Reflections on Income Diversification (2025–2030)

We support the ambition to diversify the RNA's income streams and reduce reliance on core grant funding. A mixed-model approach is both sensible and necessary for long-term resilience. However, we believe it is equally important to approach this transition with honesty, realism, and clarity.

As we consider the proposed income mix, we must be willing to ask:

- What is currently working?
- What has limited potential?
- Are we overstating the viability of certain income streams, such as merchandise sales?

For example, if merchandise generates only modest returns, we should question whether it is appropriate to list it as an income stream in our future model — or whether it serves more as a brand engagement tool than a revenue driver.

This also ties into a deeper question: Do we truly understand what our members value and do we consistently demonstrate that we value them in return? The success of any income

strategy, particularly one involving voluntary giving or legacy fundraising, will depend on the strength of our relationship with members and the trust they place in the organisation.

We recommend that any income diversification plan be accompanied by:

- A realistic assessment of current income sources and their growth potential
- A clear articulation of our value proposition to members and supporters
- A commitment to transparency and accountability in how new income is generated and used

By grounding our strategy in evidence and member insight, we can build a funding model that is not only sustainable but also aligned with the values and expectations of the RNA community.

4. Our Reflections on Resourcing the Funding Vision

We recognise the importance of investing in the systems, tools, and capabilities required to support a sustainable funding model. However, we must also be mindful of the financial and operational realities currently facing the organisation.

With the recent flattening of the Central Office structure, it is important to allow the staff team time to consolidate their roles and responsibilities. Introducing a dedicated Fundraising Officer, while potentially beneficial, would represent a significant financial commitment and we must be confident that such a role would deliver clear and measurable value.

In parallel, we believe there is a need to engage with our membership to better understand their expectations around fundraising. Specifically, we should ask:

Do our members believe they are fundraising to support the creation of new roles at Central Office (this has been raised), or do they see their efforts as a way to directly support their fellow Shipmates?

If it is the latter, we must communicate this clearly and ensure that fundraising efforts are visibly linked to member impact.

The recent *Race Across the UK* campaign demonstrated the potential of well-communicated, purpose-driven fundraising. Similarly, Shipmate Peter Godwin's idea of a National Anchor Day is a promising concept. However, like all initiatives, it will require time, coordination, and volunteer energy. We suggest piloting this with a small number of branches to test feasibility and gather feedback before considering a national rollout.

Finally, we should not overlook the value of leveraging existing fundraising platforms and events, such as the Kiltwalk and other regional challenges. These offer low-barrier opportunities for members to get involved without the need to create entirely new campaigns. By highlighting what can be achieved through these efforts and the difference it makes we can build momentum and demonstrate the collective power of the RNA community.

5. Our Reflections on the Ask and Conclusion

We support the strategic direction outlined in the funding vision and agree with the proposed actions under *The Ask*. However, we believe that the ongoing management and further development of the RNA's relationship with RNRMC must remain the central focus of this transition. This partnership is not only foundational to our current funding model but also to our credibility, reach, and alignment with the wider Naval charitable ecosystem.

We recognise that the RNA is a values-based organisation, and we fully support the need for change. However, we also believe that the timing of change is critical. To ensure credibility and maintain the trust of our members, funders, and stakeholders, any transition must be carefully paced and strategically communicated. This will allow us to cement our place in the spaces we operate not just as a service provider, but as a trusted, enduring presence in the lives of those who have served.

Conclusion

As Trustees we are aware of the RNA's strength lies in its mission, its people, and its deep community roots. With the right balance of ambition, realism, and timing, we can build a funding model that honours our past, supports our present, and secures our future.

Shipmate Stephen Elliot

National Council Member-Scottish Area

Appendix C: Practical Fundraising Proposals and Coordination Model (Shipmate Karen Elliot)

Thoughts submitted via email.

A few thoughts / suggestions from me for some national fundraising initiatives for the RNA:

GENERAL:

- Consider Area Co-ordinator(s) for fundraising initiatives
- Arrange for buckets and collecting tins to be ordered
- Distribute the collecting tins / buckets to Areas
- Area Co-ordinator make collecting tins available to Branches / S/Ms for relevant national collecting initiatives
- Central Office prepare relevant briefing / fundraising advice pack / role description for the Area Co-ordinator(s)
- Central Office / Area Co-ordinators ensure S/Ms are aware that monies raised in the branded buckets / tins will be for the RNA
- Consider 'stickers' with the RNA logo printed for giving out by collectors to those donating - distribute these to the Area Co-ordinator(s)
- Consider sourcing "tap" machines for use at major events - 1 / 2 per Areas - to be held by Area Co-ordinator(s)
- Arrange with RNA Bank for Area Co-ordinators to be able to deposit monies collected directly to the RNA A/C via the Bank

NATIONAL RAIL BUCKET COLLECTION:

- Establish a link with the National Rail Network
- Once / twice per annum arrange a day at Stations across the UK for a bucket collection (make these the same each year (e.g. 3rd Saturday in February / 4th Friday in September, etc.)
- Arrange for buckets and collection tins and stickers to be distributed (if not already)
- Arrange for "tap" machines to be available at the major Stations as well as the buckets
- Establish volunteers in each Area to be the point-of-contact for the main Stations and to co-ordinate the volunteers (the "Area Co-ordinator")
- Arrange S/Ms to take an hour / two / day to be at the Station(s) to collect donations

- Encourage the use of pop-up banners, etc. and for S/Ms to wear RNA rig / RNA branded clothing

ANNUAL SPONSORED WALK:

- Consider linking with established event(s) (e.g. KiltWalk, local 10k / marathon, etc.), but encourage more S/Ms / Teams to enter and raise funds for the RNA - have efforts co-ordinated by Central Office and the Area Fundraising Co-ordinator(s)

ANNUAL HOST A TEA PARTY / DINNER:

- Similar to other charities - arrange an annual event that S/Ms can host across the country - venue, tea, cakes, sandwiches, ... - sell tickets, have a raffle / tombola, accept donations
- host a dinner party in your own home - invite your friends - ask them to pay for their dinner what they would have paid in a restaurant - encourages comradeship, tackles loneliness, raises funds win, win, win.