



The Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland

William Ramsay McGhee, MStJ, D.L., Grand Master Mason

Scottish Freemasonry and Remembrance 2020

Monday 5th October 2020

Brethren,

As promised last Friday, I hereby circulate the guidance received from Brother Gordon Michie, Poppy Scotland, regarding Remembrance parades. It is important to understand that this guidance could change between now and 11th November. If it does, Grand Lodge will update you.

Ramsay McGhee

Grand Master Mason

The current guidance from the Scottish Government allows for Remembrance Events to happen at local War Memorials, but these are subject to change between now and Remembrance Sunday. All events are to be conducted under strict guidelines and organisers are encouraged to try and limit attendance where possible and ensure that social distancing rules are in force. The following guidance has been issued to Legion Branches and Local Authorities who have the responsibility for organising local events. As you know, I, along with many others have been great advocates of brethren supporting their local parade/services in regalia over the years and be seen to be active participants in our local community. This year, however, I think it would be prudent that we only encourage Lodges to send one representative to their local event in an official capacity and that Lodges should liaise with their local organiser before-hand to understand the local situation. By doing this the Scottish Craft will be seen to comply with the request from both Legion Scotland/Poppyscotland and the Scottish Government to try and reduce numbers at these events whilst still recognising the importance that Remembrance holds to each and every one of us across the country.

I have attached a copy of the current guidance for your information.

Gordon Michie



Guidance for planning Remembrance events

In order to support current Guidelines against Covid 19 to suppress and reduce infection rates, Legion Scotland would like to urge its entire membership to avoid large gatherings and as regrettable as it is to say, this must include events surrounding Remembrance this year. Therefore, we would urge our Branches and those who organise annual events to honour the fallen to keep all non-essential attendance at remembrance events to an absolute minimum.

In order to assist branches to plan and conduct Remembrance events safely we have listed a few areas where branches should comply to make events safer to attend this list is non exhaustive and each area will have slight differences in the way councils will expect events to be run.

1. Obtain permission from the venue/landowner for the event (& check availability). If on Council-owned land, you will be required to complete and submit the relevant application form.
2. The local Police will need to be informed that an event is taking place and they will need to be informed of approximate numbers in attendance at the event.
3. Identify what other permissions you might need if road closures, temporary parking restriction orders or public transport diversions are required for the event and submit the relevant applications.
4. For large or more complex events, an EPOG (Event Planning & Operations Group) Meeting with relevant stakeholders may be called to discuss your plans. This will be chaired by the Council's Public Safety team.
5. Public liability Insurance should be in place to cover the event.
6. You should seriously consider having first aid cover at the event by a minimum of 2 suitably qualified persons, a good point of contact for this is info@phoenixmedsafety.co.uk they can also be reached on 07846773720 or St Johns Ambulance <https://www.sja.org.uk/what-we-do/our-first-aid-services/event-first-aid-cover/event-first-aid-cover-costs/>
7. Recce the Area prior to the event, regardless of how many times you have been there in the past, it will be important to check the site fully prior to the event so you can see any changes to the area and so you can amend your plans accordingly.
8. Please look at the event site carefully and decide the maximum amount of people that can fit into the area whilst maintaining social distancing guidance, the organiser of the event will ultimately be held responsible by the authorities if they go against social distancing guidance.
9. Prepare your risk assessment (Councils may ask you to submit a copy of this prior to the event) make sure the risk assessment is signed by the person completing it. The risk assessment should then be checked again by another person to make sure it is still applicable as close to the date of the event as possible or preferably on the day of the event, make changes to the risk assessment



if required and make sure changes have been recorded and the person making the changes should sign and date the risk assessment.

10. You should have volunteers to act as stewards to assist with enforcing social distancing at the event. You must be able to control the numbers attending your event and have a plan for managing unexpected turn ups on the day or general public interest which may result in people gathering in the vicinity of your event.
11. You should provide a suitable means of hand washing or sanitising at the event site and encourage its use by participants.
12. Pipers and Buglers if they are involved they should be a safe distance away from attendees and public.
13. You should not include singing hymns at the event.
14. You will need a robust process in place for track and trace for all those who attend and will be required to gather contact information on all participants.
15. You should have a process in place for the flow of movement which in essence should be a one-way system in the location you use, which allows social distancing to be observed during all parts of the event.
16. If the event is an indoor church service, the current Government guidelines should be followed. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-events-sector-guidance/>
17. Parades are not currently permitted under current guidelines.
18. If you would normally use local press or PR to promote your events you can still do so, but you should use this medium to highlight that your events is closed to the general public to avoid people turning up on the day.

The above listed points (with the exception of COVID specific guidance, i.e. social distancing) hold true of any commemorative or Remembrance event which is being held.

Remembrance is a crucial part of our remit as an organisation in Scotland and we know how important this is to our membership and the veterans we support. However, during these unprecedented times we have a moral and legal obligation to ensure no events are planned which contravene current Government guidelines. We must ensure anything which takes place in the “name” of the Legion does not put our members, volunteers or the general public at risk.

Our major commemorations throughout 2020 have all had to be scaled back and in some cases moved to an entirely virtual format. We have had to change our approaches to ensure we are still honouring and remembering the fallen but doing so in a safe and compliant manner, Remembrance will be no different.

The Dedication of the Gardens in Edinburgh and Glasgow, as well as the National service on Remembrance Sunday (8th November) have all been scaled back to the bare minimum of attendees and this should provide a benchmark for all local events this year. If the National events will be small, then we expect local events to also follow this format.

Our supporters and the veterans will be understanding of the changes that are required and under no circumstances should anyone feel under pressure to deliver a large-scale event or a Remembrance service/parade akin to what has been put on in previous years.



If your event organisers are unable to carry out any of the steps noted above, specifically those in relation to current COVID guidelines then they should refrain from holding the event and find alternative means to mark Remembrance appropriately.

We appreciate everyone will want to do their very best to mark Remembrance but if you are in any doubt at all that you will be unable to minimise risk for your participants then you should refrain from proceeding with your event.

Please note this guidance is correct at the time of distribution but there will be two further 3 weekly updates from Scottish Government around the 13th of October and 3rd of November which may have a further impact on how we proceed with any plans to mark Remembrance.

We will all need to be ready to react to potential further restrictions as quickly as possible and if we return to more strict lockdown measures either locally or nationally then we will need to be in a position to cancel planned commemorations and notify all participants at short notice.

We want everyone to have a safe Remembrance period and we must all work together to ensure that nothing we plan attracts adverse media attention or damages the reputation of the organisation.

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