

The Bugle

Summer 2025



**Sight Scotland
Veterans**

Tackling vision loss together

sightscotlandveterans.org.uk

Welcome to the Summer Edition of The Bugle

Welcome to our summer edition of The Bugle! It's been a busy and inspiring few months here at Sight Scotland Veterans. We were proud to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day and recently held our first 'Centre Without Walls' event in Montrose, bringing our support directly into communities around Scotland.

Another exciting development has been the launch of the free companion travel rail scheme with ScotRail - a pilot project that was directly inspired by our veterans' feedback. Open to anyone with an eye +1 National Entitlement Card (NEC), the scheme allows companions to travel for free with a visually impaired passenger.

We've received wonderful support from veterans' families and enthusiastic staff fundraising on our behalf. Building on this, we're now increasing our fundraising efforts. If you, your family, or friends have creative ideas or want to join events like the Kiltwalk or a marathon, please get in touch.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of The Bugle and that you have a lovely summer.



Warm wishes,
Gillian McDonald
End of article

99-Year-Old Navy veteran attends BBC's VE Day 80 concert in London thanks to Sight Scotland Veterans

As the nation marked the 80th anniversary of VE Day, one remarkable veteran made a once-in-a-lifetime trip to London to honour the day he helped secure.

Hector McDonald, a 99-year-old Royal Navy veteran from Livingston, travelled to London to attend the BBC's commemorative VE Day 80 Concert on 8 May 2025. The invitation came as a heartfelt thank you after an interview Hector gave for a BBC segment on VE Day 80 - arranged by Sight Scotland Veterans which has supported Hector for over ten years.

Hector served in the Royal Navy from 6 October 1943 until September 1946. During his time at sea, he braved the perilous conditions of the Atlantic Ocean as part of the Arctic Convoys, a vital but dangerous mission that helped sustain the Allied war effort. In recognition of his courage, he was awarded the Atlantic Star, a medal created to honour those who served in the freezing and treacherous northern seas during the Second World War. He later served in the Pacific, including operations in the Philippines and Japan.

Hector explains: "I joined the Royal Navy when I was 18, and after just six weeks of training, I was sent to sea. I served from

1943 to 1946, taking part in the Arctic Convoys and then served in the Pacific, including in the Philippines and Japan. When victory in Europe was declared, we were given two bottles of beer, but the war wasn't over for us. We still had to fight on in the Pacific. We were just north of Tokyo when we heard the Japanese had surrendered. I attended victory parades in Sydney and Melbourne.

"It is hard to believe it's 80 years ago since the war ended. VE day is a day to remember what happened and is a reminder to us all about the horror of war, but it is not a celebration. Too much happened to celebrate. I'll never forget the day the war ended, there was such relief. We'd been through so much, and suddenly there was hope again."

Hector, who is visually impaired because of macular degeneration, has found invaluable friendship and support through Sight Scotland Veterans, regularly attending the charity's Linburn Centre in Wilkieston, West Lothian, every Monday and Friday.

Hector comments: "Sight Scotland Veterans have been such a great support. They do so much for all of us, making sure we are not left feeling isolated at home. I love going to the Linburn Centre, it's like a second family to me, I go every Monday and Friday, and I really wouldn't miss it. Since I lost my sight, the support I've had from Sight Scotland Veterans really has been incredible. They've helped me stay active and connected and I've made some wonderful friends. I feel so privileged to have a place like the Linburn Centre to come to each week."

Hector, who will celebrate his 100th birthday in September, was joined on his trip to London by Andy Cole, a Sight Scotland Veterans' Sports and Partnership Volunteer.

Caption: A black-and-white photograph of Hector, seated second from the right, alongside eight of his crewmates during World War Two.



Caption: Hector and Andy, both smartly dressed, stand in Horse Guards Parade in London, ready to attend the VE Day 80 concert.



Caption: Hector, smartly dressed and wearing a blue flat cap, stands beside the 'Whisky Express' - a blue train adorned with both the Scottish and English flags.



Mick Buchanan, from Kilwinning, a regular at the Hawkhead Centre, also had the honour of attending the VE Day 80 concert in London alongside his sister, Jean. Mick, who lives with macular degeneration, described the experience as a truly proud and memorable occasion.

End of article



Caption: Mick Buchanan stands in Horse Guards Parade, London, with a large screen behind him emblazoned with 'VE Day 80'.

Get involved

If you would like to help fundraise for Sight Scotland Veterans please visit sightscotland.org.uk/veterans/get-involved/ways-to-give

Veterans at Hawkhead and Linburn celebrate 80th anniversary of VE Day

Thursday 8 May 2025 marked the 80th anniversary of VE Day, and veterans across Scotland came together to honour this important milestone in British history. Events were held in communities throughout the country, with our veterans leading the way in commemorating the end of the Second World War in Europe.

At our Hawkhead Centre, the day began with a warm welcome and refreshments, followed by a host of garden games and a fascinating display of First World War memorabilia. We were delighted to be joined by Royal Marines from Faslane, who shared a three-course lunch with our veterans. The celebrations included watching the official VE Day concert attended by His Majesty King Charles, and a moving tribute during the national two-minute silence.

Over at Linburn, the garden was transformed for a full-scale VE Day party. Long tables, adorned with Union Jack bunting, brought veterans and staff together to enjoy a celebratory lunch. There was live music, dancing, and even a handmade ice cream van to add to the festive atmosphere.

It was a truly memorable day - a joyful and meaningful way to reflect on the bravery and sacrifice of all who served, and to celebrate peace and freedom with pride.

End of article



Caption: Jacqui Salter, Deputy Centre Manager at Linburn, is smiling with her thumbs up standing behind John and Helen at the VE Day 80 commemorations.



Caption: Three staff members at the Linburn Centre, dressed up for VE Day, peer through a window of a homemade cardboard ice cream van.



Caption: Veterans, some wearing Union Jack hats, sit at a table outside the Linburn Centre during the VE Day 80 commemorations.



Caption: During the VE Day 80 commemorations at the Hawkhead Centre, some of our veterans sit alongside two Royal Marines from Faslane.

Stay updated

To stay updated follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/SightScotlandVeterans

Help is always on hand through our Information Line

If you're feeling isolated, in need of support, or simply don't know where to turn, our Information Line is here for you. Whether you have questions about sight loss, need practical advice or require new equipment, support is just a phone call away.

At the heart of our Information Line are the warm and welcoming voices of Kelly and Sherry. They are available to take your call from Monday to Thursday, between 10am and 4pm, and on Fridays from 10am to 3pm. If they're unable to answer immediately, please leave a message and they will get back to you as soon as possible.

We understand that reaching out for help isn't always easy. Whether you're experiencing loneliness, have questions about services, or need guidance with day-to-day living, please know that you are not alone. Our team is ready to listen, support, and assist you in whatever way we can.

Meet Kelly and Sherry

Kelly and Sherry, our Sight Loss Information Workers, are always ready to listen, chat, and provide guidance. They are here to support you every step of the way.

Kelly and Sherry both say the best part of their jobs is knowing they're making a real difference in the lives of our veterans.

Kelly says: "I truly love my job. We're here to listen and to help. We understand that many veterans are proud and independent, so picking up the phone can feel like a big step. That's why we make sure every caller feels welcome, listened to, and respected right from the start.

"There's no rush – we take the time to really listen. That helps us understand what kind of support is needed, whether it's help around the home, mobility advice, or emotional support."

"Every call is different, because every veteran's story is unique. We tailor our support to suit each person. Sometimes, just having someone to talk to who understands can make a huge difference."

Sherry adds: "We feel incredibly privileged to do this job. Often, we're the first point of contact for a veteran reaching out for support, and that really matters."

"When someone is at the very beginning of their sight loss journey, speaking to the right person can make all the difference. That first conversation can be life changing.

"Every veteran who has joined the charity since 2023 will have spoken to someone from our team and we don't take that responsibility lightly. We listen, we understand, and we genuinely want to help. It's so important that people feel heard by someone who truly gets what they're going through."

So, next time you call our Information Line, know that you'll be speaking to people who truly care and who are here to help.



Caption: Sight Loss Information worker, Kelly, smiles with a yellow Sight Scotland Veterans banner behind her.



Caption: Sight Loss Information worker, Sherry, smiles for the camera.

A life changing phone call

Jim Cantley, 76, a regular at the Linburn Centre, first called the Information Line in December last year.

Having recently lost his wife, Jim was finding things extremely difficult. He felt lonely, isolated, and unsure of where to turn for support.

He explains: "I really can't praise the Information Line enough for what they did for me. I was so low and lonely when I made that call - I honestly think they saved my life. Just having someone to talk to, someone who understood what I was going through and genuinely wanted to help, not just rush me off the phone, meant everything to me.

"Now, I love going to Linburn every week and I take part in the Digital Hub calls too, it really has changed my life. I've made so

many new friends, and none of it would have happened if I hadn't picked up the phone.

"I've developed a great relationship with Kelly and Sherry. Knowing that when I call, I'll speak to a real person who truly cares is just so important. If I ever needed help or support again, I wouldn't hesitate for a second to call the Information Line. I'd really encourage others to do the same. It's a fantastic service."

End of article

Caption: Jim Cantley, wearing glasses sits down and looks towards the camera.



More information

To speak to Kelly or Sherry please call our Information Line on 0800 035 6409.

66-year-old newspaper photo sparks nostalgic memories for veteran Ann

Ann McLean, who lives with macular degeneration, was a dedicated member of the Women's Royal Army Corps, based at Whitehall Barracks in Paisley. She joined the Armed Forces at the age of 20 with hopes of becoming a truck driver but was told she was "too wee" for the role. Despite this, Ann thoroughly enjoyed her time in the Territorial Army and was proudly promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal during her service.

One of Ann's proudest memories was being chosen to represent the Women's Royal Army Corps at the Paisley British Legion Festival of Remembrance at Paisley Ice Rink in November 1959.

Ann recalls: "There were four of us, each representing a different service, including one from the US Air Force based at Prestwick. I remember standing there, surrounded by so many people - it felt like the Albert Hall when the poppies fell. It was a bit overwhelming but incredibly moving. My father was so proud. With no sons, he turned to my mother and said, 'That's the son I never had.'"

Ann's granddaughter, Sophie, was fascinated by her gran's story and decided to do some research at The Mitchell Library in Glasgow.

Sophie said: "I searched through the Paisley newspaper archives but had no luck until a librarian suggested checking The Bulletin, as it often featured photographs. Sure enough, we found the very photo my gran remembered. I snapped a picture on my phone and later had a large poster made so she could see it properly!"

Ann is thrilled to share her story with the Sight Scotland Veterans community: "I'm so grateful to see this story in print, it's something I've wanted for a long time. I'm proud to be part of Sight Scotland Veterans; it's a fantastic community of people with shared experiences.

"I'd love to hear from any other veterans who remember that day at the Paisley Ice Rink – it would be wonderful to share memories together."

End of article



Caption: Ann and her granddaughter Sophie sit together, looking at an enlarged photo taken at the British Legion Festival of Remembrance held at Paisley Ice Rink in November 1959.



Caption: Ann stands beside a window holding up the enlarged photo from the British Legion Festival of Remembrance held at Paisley Ice Rink in November 1959.

Find out more

To learn more about our support for veterans with sight loss, visit sightscotland.org.uk/veterans

Archie loving life at Linburn!

At 94, RAF veteran Archie McGregor from Perth is one of the newest members of the Linburn Centre. At first, Archie was hesitant to come along to the centre, requiring plenty of encouragement for a few years to take the leap. But now, he only has one regret... not doing it sooner!

Archie says he was impressed from the moment he walked through the doors, as the staff went above and beyond to make him feel welcome. Despite the early mornings and the long journey - he requires two buses just to reach the minibus pick-up point - he describes attending Linburn as the highlight of his week!

Archie shares: "I love going along to the Linburn Centre; I can't praise them enough. It is the highlight of my week. I love all the activities and getting the chance to try new things. Archery and shooting have been fantastic, and I love the quizzes, it's so important to realise that even when you start losing your sight, there is still so much you can do. I've made so many new friends.

"My Independent Living Worker, Marjory Kirkwood, has been amazing. She's helped me with lots in the house, but the biggest thing she has done for me is persuading me to come to Linburn!"

Archie, who was in the RAF between 1946 And 1950, began to lose his sight four years ago due to age related macular

degeneration, which came on unexpectedly and was quite a shock. He thanks his doctors for introducing him to Sight Scotland Veterans.

Archie adds: "I'm so glad they told me about the charity, as it has helped me in so many ways. If anyone is thinking about giving Linburn or Hawkhead a go, my advice would be - do it now!"

End of article



Caption: Archie is sitting down firing a gun during an acoustic shooting session at the Linburn Centre.



Caption: Archie is smiling and waving at the camera, wearing a hat and a jacket, standing beside a grey Sight Scotland Veterans minibus.

Stay updated

Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/SightScotlandVeterans to stay updated on our work, support services, and inspiring stories.

Vision Impaired Veteran turns personal struggles into mission to help others

Steven Williams, a former soldier who lost his eye after being injured during a patrol in Kenya, is determined to use his story to inspire others to support Sight Scotland Veterans.

Steven, aged 42, has been supported by Sight Scotland Veterans since being medically discharged from the army in 2011 and now works for the charity as an independent living worker. He is now taking on four Kilt Walks in 2025, in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee, to say thank you to a charity that has done so much to help him both personally and professionally.

He explains: "Sight Scotland Veterans is a fantastic charity. It supported me in my time of need, and now I want to give back. I really want to raise awareness of the great work the charity does, as too many people with vision impairment suffer in silence and we all need some support at different times.

"I served ten years in the Army, starting with the Royal Scots. I did a couple of tours in Iraq and each one was completely different. The first was intense combat, modern day warfare. The second was more about training the Iraqi Army to be self-sufficient and allow the British Armed Forces to leave. There were some hairy moments along the way, we got blown up by an

Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in the back of a FV510 Warrior armoured vehicle.

"I returned from that seven-month tour in March 2008, and by early summer, I heard The Black Watch were seeking a 30-man platoon from other Scottish regiments for their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan. I loved the Army and, naively feeling invincible, volunteered for transfer to The Black Watch. Part of our training took place in Kenya, where the terrain and heat mirrored conditions in Afghanistan. After four weeks in the field near Nairobi, a branch snapped back during a patrol and struck me in the eye. There was no blood, and you couldn't really stop, so I kept going, but by morning I couldn't see. I was CASEVAC (casualty evacuated) from the field and taken to hospital in Nairobi where they removed part of the thorn. I flew back with a field doctor having drops put in my eye every fifteen minutes during a ten-hour flight.

"Back in the UK, I went to Moorfields Eye Hospital in London to stabilise my eye and I was transferred to Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre for a week before returning to my unit in Edinburgh. I still had the eye, but I had no central vision. Over the next two years, I went through twelve operations, everything from treating cataracts to infections and high pressure. The doctors didn't really know what to do. Eventually, they gave me a choice of keep undergoing treatments and medication or to remove the eye. I made the difficult decision to have it taken out in May 2011, and the following week I was told I was no longer "fit to serve." I was

gutted, but after two years of being unable to serve as a soldier due to my injury, I felt ready to leave the Army, but it was still daunting.

"After that, things got extremely hard. I started to feel sorry for myself and I didn't know what to do. I essentially lost my eye, my job, my purpose, and I felt completely lost. It was around this time I started to get help from Sight Scotland Veterans and my independent living worker in Midlothian was amazing. Until I had my eye removed, people didn't even understand that I was injured. It was invisible, and that made it even harder to deal with.

"The support I received from Sight Scotland Veterans was invaluable. They encouraged me to get involved with the community again which led me to the Lothian Veterans Centre where, after seven months of volunteering, I was offered a part-time job as an employability officer. Eventually, I became the operations Manager for 4 years. I took voluntary redundancy from Lothian Veterans Centre in May 2019. This became a real turning point for me. I took time to re-evaluate my life and even began exploring mindfulness and yoga. Around nine months later, I successfully applied for a role with Sight Scotland Veterans as a centre worker and started at Linburn in 2020.

"In August last year, I started a new role as an independent living worker for Fife, and I thoroughly enjoy helping veterans live as independently as possible and reconnect with their communities.

I know first-hand how vital this support is, especially for those experiencing sight loss for the first time or facing significant changes.”

End of article



Caption: Steven Williams stands beside his partner Wilma at the Kiltwalk finish line. Both are smiling, wearing kilts and Sight Scotland Veterans t-shirts.

Caption: Steven Williams, seated second from the right, sits atop an armoured vehicle adorned with Hibs and Hearts flags, with Scottish flags flying in the background.



Caption: Steven Williams stands with fellow soldiers of 3 Platoon, D Squadron during Operation Telic 11 (2007–08), beneath the Scottish and Royal banners.



Get Involved

For more information about fundraising for Sight Scotland Veterans visit sightscotland.org.uk/veterans/get-involved/ways-to-give

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and wearable tech is here

A quiet shift is underway. Blind and visually impaired people are beginning to use the latest generation of assistive technology to live more independently and confidently.

From AI-powered wearable devices that describe the environment and apps that read out printed text, it is an exciting moment for the blind and VI community.

Tools once seen as science fiction are now becoming everyday helpers and, for more and more people, essential ones.

These developments are fast becoming a practical blend of powerful tools and smaller and easier to use devices.

What's Changing?

Artificial intelligence has moved quickly into practical applications. It is now embedded in everything from phones to home appliances. Its potential and value are amazing.

Wearables like Smart Glasses can offer real-time feedback through audio. They help identify people, objects, text, and environments.

Although not perfect, they can be a real boost when entering a new environment and can even answer questions you may ask.

Imagine it like this; you can now walk into a coffee shop, ask your

glasses where the counter is, and then ask them to read out the menu!

They allow users to receive information quickly, discreetly, and without relying on others. For people adjusting to vision loss, that can mean more than convenience; it can mean getting back to a sense of self-reliance and confidence.

We are also listening to you, our community who tell us about your experiences with these things, good and bad so that we can share that knowledge with others whom it might help.

Where We Go from Here

Our community has always been open to practical, functional tools. AI and wearable tech aren't a magic fix, but they are helping people do more. For most people we support, it isn't about flashy technology. It's about tools that fit discreetly into real people's lives, and that help them keep moving forward. Need help with your accessible technology? Remember Jason and Amy are here to support you every step of the way.

End of article



Caption: Jason and Amy from our accessible technology team are sitting down next to each other.

Need advice?

If you have any questions or need some advice on accessible technology, please get in touch with Jason and Amy by calling 0800 035 6409.

Football Fan Gordie Says Sight Scotland Veterans 'Saved My Life'

Navy veteran Gordon "Gordie" Armour, aged 57 from Falkirk, has thanked Sight Scotland Veterans for helping him regain his life after enduring a devastating stroke.

Gordie, who served in the Navy from 1984 to 1989 before working as a Prison Officer and later as a CCTV Operator, suffered a stroke at the age of 49. The stroke led to significant loss of his peripheral vision, leaving him feeling isolated and severely depressed.

Gordie said: "I was in a very dark place after my stroke. I lost all my confidence and didn't want to leave my house. Sight Scotland Veterans saved my life. I was suicidal and didn't know what to do. The charity has been amazing with me; it gave me my purpose back in life and showed me what is still possible."

Gordie's journey to recovery began when he visited his local veteran's club in Grangemouth, where he was introduced to the services offered by Sight Scotland Veterans.

"The hardest thing was not being able to drive anymore. Sight Scotland Veterans got me out of the house and gave me a reason to keep going. I'm now busier than I've ever been. I go to the Linburn Centre every week, and they come and collect me, which is amazing. I spend most of my time in the Woodwork Room,

which is something I would never have believed a few years ago - I hated woodwork at school! But now, I've made benches, shoe racks, plant pots, even a rocking horse for my granddaughter.

"The real thing they've shown me is that life goes on, and you can still be happy even after something as devastating as a stroke and sight loss. It was the Linburn Centre that got me back into football. They organised a day trip to Falkirk FC and asked if I wanted to go along. I've supported Falkirk, my local team, for over 20 years, but I hadn't been to any games since my stroke. I just love it now, and I get tickets through the Falkirk Blind Club, so I try and never miss a home game. I'm now the Vice Chair of the group."

End of article

Caption: Gordie wearing a hat and jacket, sits beside his granddaughter, in the stand at a Falkirk match.



Support Us

If you would like to help fundraise for Sight Scotland Veterans please visit sightscotland.org.uk/veterans/get-involved/donate/ways-give

Sight Scotland Veterans' Financial Wellbeing Team secures over £236,000 for Veterans

Over the past 12 months, Sight Scotland Veterans' Financial Wellbeing Team has helped veterans secure an incredible £236,227 in benefits.

The Financial Wellbeing team supports veterans with everything from applying for benefits to giving advice on managing money. Their friendly, expert help is making a real impact.

Sue McKay, Financial Wellbeing Lead, explains: "We know that asking for financial help isn't always easy, but we're here to take the pressure off and make sure veterans get the support they deserve.

"If you're a veteran with sight loss and need any financial advice or help, please get in touch through our Information Line. We would be delighted to have a chat with you and see what help we can provide."

End of article

Need advice?

To speak to someone from our Financial Wellbeing service, call us on 0800 035 6409.

Friendship, Fishing and a Trip of a Lifetime

Brian Rice and David Martin, who are regulars at Sight Scotland Veterans' Hawkhead Centre in Paisley, recently went on the fishing trip of a lifetime to Canada.

Brian, aged 70, served in the Army from 1970 to 1986 and experienced sight loss due to a stroke. David, 41, served in the 3rd Battalion the Royal Regiment of Scotland (Black Watch) until a car accident at the age of 29 left him with sight loss and ultimately led to him being medically discharged from the Army. Although both men had attended the Hawkhead Centre for some time, it was during the Cenotaph Parade in London in 2023 that their friendship truly blossomed.

While in London for the Remembrance Parade, Brian and David began talking about their shared love of fishing. Brian shared his memories of being stationed in Canada during his service and spoke about the amazing fishing he experienced there. Having been on fishing trips to Canada several times before, Brian told David how much he thought he would enjoy it. Brian was planning a return trip and, when David expressed an interest in joining him, the idea of a joint fishing trip was born.

Turning a Dream into Reality

The two veterans wasted no time planning their adventure. In October of the following year, their dream came true as they travelled to Canada together for a fishing trip of a lifetime.

Surrounded by stunning landscapes, they spent their days fishing, catching impressive fish, and sharing many laughs along the way.

Brian commented: "It was an incredible experience. Being back in Canada and enjoying some fishing with a good friend made it all the more special. We hadn't really spoken much before attending the Cenotaph Parade with Sight Scotland Veterans, but while sitting in the hotel bar, we struck up a conversation, hit it off, and got talking about fishing - and that's really where the idea for the trip began.

David added: "It wasn't just about the fishing, it was about friendship and proving to ourselves that we can still do amazing things despite our sight loss."

Their journey highlights how support from organisations like Sight Scotland Veterans can help veterans with sight loss overcome isolation, build lasting friendships, rediscover passions, and create incredible memories.

End of article

Caption: Brian and Davie are sitting together during their visit to the Cenotaph Parade.



Caption: Brian holds a large fish while standing on a boat during the fishing trip in Canada.



Caption: Davie, wearing a red cap, holds up a large fish during the fishing trip to Canada.



Get involved

Are you interested in getting involved in sports and activities in your area? Please call 0800 035 6409.

Montrose veteran thanks Sight Scotland Veterans

John Grant Gordon, a 95-year-old veteran from Montrose who lives with macular degeneration, has praised Sight Scotland Veterans for the help and support they give to people all around Scotland.

John attended a Sight Scotland Veterans' activity day held in Montrose last year and has been amazed by the support he has received ever since.

He explains: "I first came along to the Sight Scotland Veterans activity day in Montrose last year to find out more about what the charity does. I wasn't expecting it to have such a big impact, but I had a fantastic day. The atmosphere was so warm and welcoming, I was amazed to see just how much support is out there for veterans like me.

"Since then, I've become a regular on the charity's digital hub calls on a Friday. I join in with the quizzes, enjoy a good laugh, and chat with other veterans from across the country. It's made a huge difference to me, helping me feel less isolated and giving me something to look forward to each week.

"Being supported by Sight Scotland Veterans has helped me feel connected again. When you develop sight loss, it's easy to feel cut off, your confidence takes a knock, and you don't always

know where to turn. But the charity has helped me find a real sense of community.

“It’s great the charity is supporting veterans not just in the big cities, but right here in Montrose too. It means so much to have something like this happening on our doorstep – it shows we’re not alone, and that there’s support available when you need it most.”

End of article

Caption: John Grant Gordon, wearing a Glengarry, is sitting at a table with an electronic magnifier in front of him.



Stay updated

Follow Sight Scotland Veterans at www.facebook.com/SightScotlandVeterans

Free companion travel for blind and partially sighted people on Scotrail trains

From 1 April 2025, blind and partially sighted people across Scotland can travel by train with a companion for free, thanks to a new pilot scheme from ScotRail. Open to anyone with an eye +1 National Entitlement Card (NEC), the initiative means companions will no longer have to pay when accompanying a visually impaired passenger.

This life-changing scheme, inspired by our veterans, will help to reduce isolation, promote independence, and improve mental wellbeing. For many with sight loss, train travel can be challenging, especially when navigating unfamiliar stations or busy platforms. Having a companion makes journeys safer, more manageable, and more enjoyable.

The pilot brings rail travel in line with existing free companion travel on buses and ferries across Scotland. By removing a major cost, it will help more people get to appointments, see loved ones, and enjoy daily life with more confidence.

As the free companion rail travel scheme is still only a pilot, we need your help to make sure it becomes permanent. If you've used the scheme or plan to, we'd love to hear from you. Sharing your story could help show just how important the scheme really is.

End of article



Caption: Veteran, Joe Tottenham, stands beside his companion on a platform at Haymarket station in Edinburgh.

Get in touch

If you have used the free companion rail travel scheme, please get in touch either by calling 0800 035 6409 or by emailing stories@sightscotland.org.uk

Sight Scotland Veterans Announces Proposed Land Sale to Safeguard Charity's Future

Sight Scotland Veterans has announced plans to sell part of its land near the Linburn Centre in West Lothian for potential housing development. The Linburn Veterans Centre and the Centenary Hall will remain unaffected, and support services for veterans with sight loss will continue.

The charity hopes that selling this land will help secure its long-term future and ensure it can keep supporting blind and partially sighted veterans across Scotland for many years to come.

Much of the land is already earmarked for development in West Lothian Council's Local Development Plan. Sight Scotland Veterans has also asked for other parts of its wider Linburn estate to be considered for development.

Over recent years, the charity has depended on reserves, investment income, and donations to fund its work. However, forecasts show that, without taking action now, its reserves could run out by the 2030/31 financial year.

Craig Spalding, Sight Scotland Veterans Chief Executive, said: "Sight Scotland Veterans is committed to supporting veterans living with sight loss throughout Scotland. As part of our new

organisational strategy, we are taking the necessary steps to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the charity. This includes carefully reviewing our resources and making difficult decisions where necessary to preserve the essential services we provide.”

End of article

Get in touch

If you have any questions, or want any more information please call 0800 035 6409.

Join us at the Cenotaph Parade 2025

Sight Scotland Veterans would like to invite you to take part in the Remembrance Day Cenotaph Parade 2025.

For many of our veterans, participating in the Cenotaph Parade in London is one of the proudest moments of their lives. It is a deeply moving experience, providing an opportunity to honour fallen comrades and reflect on their service.

The Cenotaph Parade is not just an event; it is a moment of reflection, unity, and remembrance. Standing alongside fellow veterans, paying tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice, is an honour like no other.

Secure Your Place Now

The next Cenotaph Parade will take place on Sunday, 9 November 2025. If you are a veteran supported by Sight Scotland Veterans and would like to take part, we encourage you to get in touch as soon as possible. Spaces are limited, and demand is high.

End of article



Caption: Our smartly dressed veterans line up getting ready to march in the Cenotaph Parade in London.

Secure your place

To secure your place or to find out more information, please contact us 0800 035 6409.

Join Our General Veterans Forum

At Sight Scotland Veterans, we're inviting veterans like you to get involved in our General Veterans Forum.

The forum is a friendly and welcoming group made up of veterans with sight loss who receive support from our organisation.

Together, members share ideas, give feedback, and work with our teams to improve the support we offer across Scotland.

Do you want to help fellow veterans? Do you have ideas or experiences that could make a difference? Whether you've got suggestions, a passion for supporting others, or just want to get more involved, we'd be delighted to welcome you.

If you're interested, please give us a call on 0800 035 6409 to find out more.

Veterans Sight Support Groups

You are invited to attend our Veteran Sight Support Groups!

Sight Scotland Veterans' Sight Support Groups help veterans with visual impairments build connections, share experiences, and receive practical advice.

These groups provide a supportive environment where you can connect with others who understand the challenges of living with sight loss. Gain access to tailored advice on managing daily life with vision impairment, and take part in a variety of social events,

hobbies, and skills sessions designed to build confidence and independence. Most importantly, enjoy the emotional support and encouragement that comes from being part of a group that truly understands.

We have Sight Support Groups running all over the country, including across the Central Belt, Highlands, North East, Borders and the South West.

End of article

For more information

For more information or to find out where your nearest group is please call 0800 035 6409.

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You are receiving this magazine as you receive services from our charity, and we thought you would be interested in hearing more about the work we do and information about upcoming events and campaigns.

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**Sight Scotland
Veterans**

Tackling vision loss together