

EDINBURGH, LOTHIAN AND BORDERS BRANCH  
Branch Future Analysis  
(linked to SWOT Analysis provided by Bob Bertram)

PEST analysis (Political/Legal, Socio/Cultural, Economical, Technological)

**Political / Legal**

**Centralisation** by RAFA placing pressure on branches to conform to new norms. Although branches have normally accepted the directives and protocols from the centre, the increased pressure may cause some branch officials to decide that it is no longer worth the effort and resign.

This centralisation is most obvious from the 'One Charity' move by the centre but many other indicators also suggest that this is seen as the future by the centre. The centre provides some plausible explanations, notably reputation protection, but to some degree this does not stand up to scrutiny as the suggested misconduct by officials could still happen.

They counter this by taking control of the finances of the branch and thus removing the independence of the branch but in many ways this is an insult to the hard working officials that don't put a foot wrong and only work for the benefit of the branch and the membership. There was the standing joke in sales forces that "life would be easy if it wasn't for these damned customers", one can only feel that RAFA centre have the same feeling, "Life would be easy if it wasn't for these damned branches".

**OMOV** would seem like a democratic right but the fact that many of the branches reject it shows the strength of feeling behind the fact that a very small minority of the membership performs all of the work and it is felt that it is this very small minority that has the right determine the future of the organisation. The 'hastily cobbled together' measure from the Chairman to allow the central and virtual branches to have OMOV would again seem to be democratic but how this split between Delegate voting and OMOV can possibly be made to work will be very interesting to see. The cynic would suggest that having failed to have the delegates vote for OMOV then the centralisation caucus are attempting a back-door coup.

**Austerity** the government policy of austerity has created major needs among the veteran community that cannot be met by social services / social work as they lack the budgets and thus the mantle for the provision of these services falls on charities such as RAFA. This is identified in actuarial projections, which identify clearly that areas of social deprivation have a greatly decreased life expectancy: how can this be tolerated within a supposed caring society? One result is an increased call for resources coming from a finite pot and thus poses an identifiable risk to RAFA, RAFBF and Poppy Scotland etc.

## Socio / Cultural

**Demographics** particularly among branch officials but also the ageing membership. It is warming to see the number of serving members that are members of RAFA but how to capture that youth movement and bring it into active participation, especially in branches like ours that have no 'light blue' outlets beyond the RAF Reserve – how can we involve 603 more in the branch must be a major question. Equally are there any of the ATC officers or SNCOS that could be persuaded to provide more active support; I doubt it as these individuals have so much time committed to ATC work that they cannot have any spare time but is there any of the duties that could be farmed out and might be done remotely on a drill night?

A major risk to the branch is the **loss of key players**; we already have experienced this with the demise of Brian Fox thus losing our Newsletter Editor and Membership Secretary. Though not losing him to the branch but the experience and counsel of William Mounsey is a loss to our active committee. Where are the replacements for the Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, HWO, and Standard Bearer to be found?

**Attitude to membership** though not totally accurate, in the majority of cases the request for assistance comes from persons who are not members of RAFA. A gentle enquiry as to whether they are members brings out a response that they were sometime in the past but haven't kept their membership up. When a person is looking for assistance there is generally a financial impact, so I never feel it is quite the right time to be looking to have them pay a subscription they possibly cannot afford at that exact moment, but one is always hopeful that they might sign up later when things are looking a bit brighter for them; a forlorn hope I know but one has to have hope!

**Economic** It is said that there are some 5000 veterans charities – all chasing the same penny. Charities that are experts in communication and marketing, such as "Help the Hero's" are most successful and the rest scramble for the remainder of the pot. It was interesting that (*if I recall correctly*) RAFA was third behind Help the Hero's and the British Legion in the list charities recognised, a poor third but third nevertheless. From a branch perspective how to capitalise on this for our Wings collections must be a major challenge.

If centralisation takes place the **loss of our funds** will be a major economic factor. Short of declaring some form of UDI, which charity law would probably prevent us from doing, it is difficult to see how we could overcome this. Moving funds into a less controllable bank will not assist as, at the end of the day, we will be forced to hand over the money. Blowing it all before the fateful day may well put us as trustees at risk of legal action unless we can prove that it was spent in the pursuit of the charities objectives.

**Technological** advancement in communications technology will provide us with both opportunity and risk. The opportunity comes from being able to better communicate with our members, minimising the use of paper-based systems. The risk is that our membership is not in a position to keep up with the changes in technology and thus unable to benefit. We have 540 or so members, I don't recall how many Brian had on email but of the remainder; would

it be impossible for us to offer assistance to those that might want to upgrade their systems but cannot find a way to do it? I don't mean that we visit 200 odd members but there are other charities out there willing to assist, particularly through the "Unforgotten Forces" group that offer computers or TV's to the over 65's. Worth exploring?

**Computerisation** the move by RAFA to the use of portals and other computer based systems is a threat to some of the older members – never mind older, I still haven't figured how to log in as the system has issued me a new password but I need the new password to log in and it will not allow me as I don't know the new password – Catch 22! *(or perhaps I should admit that it is something to do with being older!)*

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