

News story: Defence Secretary invites D-Day veterans to 75th anniversary

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson has written an open letter to veterans of the Normandy Landings inviting them to take part in D-Day75, the commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the Normandy Landings.

The Ministry of Defence has planned a series of major events with The Royal British Legion and Portsmouth City Council to mark the anniversary. Veterans of the Normandy Landings will be the VIPs of these events, ensuring that the whole country has the opportunity to thank this extraordinary generation.

Commonly referred to as D-Day the Normandy Landings began on 6 June 1944, when allied forces launched a combined naval, air and land assault on occupied Europe. Events to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the operation will be held in Normandy and around the UK this June.

The full programme of events will be announced at a launch event at The D-Day Story in Portsmouth on Wednesday 16 January 2019.

A letter from the Secretary of State for Defence, The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP

To the veterans of Normandy; the sailors, marines, soldiers and airmen who helped pave the way for the liberation of Europe,

Her Majesty's Government is proud to announce plans to mark the 75th anniversary of the Normandy Landings planned for June 2019, when the eyes of the world will be upon you once more. Your actions in 1944 were the vital springboard to the liberation of Europe and the end of the Second World War. The breathtaking bravery and ingenuity you showed during those days still echo through our nation's armed forces and society as a whole.

This year, veterans of the Normandy campaign have been invited to register with The Royal British Legion to take part in the official commemorations. The Royal British Legion has announced that a ship has been specially chartered to provide a fully-funded tour for around 300 Normandy veterans from 2 June to 9 June. Each veteran can bring one carer who will also be fully funded by the Legion and Libor grants distributed by the Government.

Veterans will be the VIPs of the commemorations and we want as many of you as possible to be able to mark this major anniversary. The Ministry of Defence, The Royal British Legion and our many fellow delivery partners are working together to let veterans know what is being planned, and to encourage them to register their interest to take part. We also call upon members of the general public to take part in commemorations in both the UK and France and to help us locate Normandy veterans they may know of.

Portsmouth will be the location of the national events in the UK and the Ministry of Defence, in conjunction with Portsmouth City Council and The

Royal British Legion, is planning a series of events to reflect the area's significant role in the preparation of one of the most audacious operations in military history.

Official commemorations will start with a ceremonial event on Portsmouth's Southsea Common on the 5 June commencing a full 5 days of activity, including flypasts, military parades, festivals, music and more. Before sunset on 5 June, the specially-chartered ship will transport veterans across the channel to Normandy. Once there, key events will include The Royal British Legion's services at Bayeux Cathedral and the Commonwealth War Grave Commission's Bayeux Cemetery before an evening of entertainment in Arromanches. Throughout the commemorations, current serving personnel from our armed forces will be there to assist veterans in both the UK and in France.

Five years ago, the President of France advised the Ministry of Defence that it wished to award the Légion d'Honneur, their highest honour, to all surviving Normandy veterans. Since then, we have processed 6,000 applications. If there are any of you who have not yet applied, then please do in order that you too can wear the medal with pride.

To register for the commemorations and apply for a place on the ship please visit The Royal British Legion's website. To apply for a Légion d'Honneur or learn more of events happening in Normandy and the UK please visit GOV.UK.

It is our intention that this June we show you, our special generation, that we will never forget the debt we owe for the peace and freedom we now enjoy.

THE RT HON GAVIN WILLIAMSON CBE MP