

Key membership engagement consultation findings

Background

The Cobseo Membership consultation was designed to provide the Cobseo office team with feedback from Members on the membership offer, and to help us consider options for its future development.

The survey was sent to all individuals that receive the Cobseo Weekly News, which was a deliberate choice not to limit the distribution list to one response per Member. The distribution choices encouraged responses from the whole of the membership, including individuals who might not ordinarily readily have contact with Cobseo.

The focus groups took place in-person in a handful of locations and further sessions were held online to make them as accessible as possible to as many Members as possible.

Why were Members consulted now?

By conducting this consultation, the Cobseo office team is learning from Members and using their feedback to inform the team's focus, priorities and business activity.

The consultation is a clear demonstration of the Cobseo office team's dedication to listening to what Members really want from their membership and how it could be developed to provide even better value to them in 2026 and beyond, and where things should be changed and improved based on verifiable feedback.

This was the first Member-wide consultation since 2015, which sought Members' views on membership benefits and examined the need for continuing and developing Cobseo's online presence and the newsletter. Following the 2015 consultation, major changes were made to the way that Cobseo communicated with its Members and how the organisation worked alongside government departments. The intention with the 2025 consultation was to seek new and additional Member input on the current suite of membership benefits available through the organisation, and to seek direction and suggestion on future developments and direction.

Headline findings

We are pleased to report that ***being a part of an organisation striving for collaboration and cooperation across the Armed Forces Charity Sector*** was the top reason why organisations join or rejoin Cobseo.

Additional key headlines include:

- **93%** of respondents **would recommend Cobseo membership** to other organisations.
- **84%** of respondents believe that **Cobseo membership is value for money**.
- **97%** of respondents **receive the Cobseo Weekly News**.

- 65% of respondents have **accessed information in the Members' area** of the website.
- 64% of respondents were **interested in additional training** for their team through their Cobseo membership – the top two topics for training were fundraising (53%) and governance (52%).
- 31% of respondents have **completed the Governance Self-Reporting tool**.
- 56% of respondents **participate in Cobseo Clusters**.

Members feedback

Following membership feedback, we're making meaningful changes across Cobseo to strengthen support, improve transparency, and enhance how we work together as a membership community.

Here's how your voices are directly shaping our next steps.

Strengthening Governance support

You told us: *The governance package could be updated and should better reflect the needs of all Members – especially where engaging with government departments.*

How we are responding: We're reviewing our full suite of governance materials to ensure they are modern, relevant, and genuinely useful for every Member organisation.

Making Membership benefits clearer

You told us: *Many Members weren't aware of everything available through their Cobseo membership.*

How we are responding: Our new communications and engagement strategy will include regular, clear promotion of benefits, events, and opportunities — across all channels, old and new.

Building stronger connections

You told us: *You value meeting the Cobseo team and sharing the information, guidance, and support available.*

How we are responding: Expect more in-person and online engagement events, plus proactively planned Member visits so everyone has the chance to connect.

More expertise, more support

You told us: *Members would welcome more guidance on specialist topics.*

How we are responding: We'll be launching a programme shaped by your feedback — covering areas like AI, impact reporting, effective fundraising, digital exclusion, and more.

Keeping the newsletters useful and engaging

You told us: *You appreciate recent improvements to the Weekly News and Jobs Bulletin.*

How we are responding: We'll continue evolving both newsletters to ensure they remain valuable and relevant.

Improving the Members' Area of the website

You told us: *Many Members don't use, or aren't aware of, the Members' area online.*

How we are responding: A major CRM and website upgrade is underway. The Members' area will be redesigned with your input, so it becomes a genuinely helpful resource.

Clarifying Cobseo's constitution

You told us: *The constitutional framework felt unclear.*

How we are responding: We will provide clear explanations and an overview of the Cobseo's constitutional framework — including the pros and cons of Cobseo becoming a charity — as part of the new membership strategy.

Ensuring all Members have a voice

You told us: *Smaller Members can feel overshadowed by larger ones.*

How we are responding: With 80% of Members being smaller organisations, we're committed to improving transparency, reviewing membership categories, and showing clearly how every Member can take part in groups, Clusters, and elections.

Enhancing governance transparency

You told us: *You want clearer insight into Cobseo's governance.*

How we are responding: An independent governance review is underway — and its findings will be shared openly across all channels.

Clarifying Membership criteria

You told us: *The Membership criteria is not clear.*

How we are responding: Criteria and due diligence processes are now online — and further development will continue under the new membership strategy and be communicated clearly to all.

Improving Executive-level engagement

You told us: *You want better engagement at Executive Committee level.*

How we are responding: This will be a core element of the governance review and the resulting membership strategy.

Making Clusters more effective

You told us: *Some Clusters feel like "talking shops."*

How we are responding: Clusters and working groups will be reviewed as part of the governance work, and the findings will be shared with Members.