Anger after store bans staff poppies

IT'S a very insensitive thing to do at a very sensitive time...it's very difficult to understand the rationale behind this decision...I ask them to reconsider this policy.

Colonel Bernard Stam, president of the Preston and District Veterans Council

A LANCASTER-based drugs store chain has banned staff from wearing poppies.

Bodycare UK, which has a head office in Leyland, has outlawed employees wearing the emblems honouring soldiers at shops across Lancashire.

Its local branches include Chorley, Lancaster and the Grahams store in Preston's Guild Arcade.

The move has been condemned by veterans' groups who are demanding the group reverses its policy immediately ahead of Remembrance Day.

Colonel Bernard Stam, president of the Preston and District Veterans' Council, said: “It’s a very insensitive thing to do at a very sensitive time.

“It’s very difficult to understand the rationale behind this decision though I presume they have got a reason.”

Coun John Swindells, Preston’s deputy mayor, said: “It’s staggering really that this is happening at this time in particular. It’s putting out the wrong message.

“I doubt it is good for business as I’m sure people will use their spending power to go elsewhere.”

John Hardiman, Lancashire county secretary for the Royal British Legion, said: “Obviously, we are disappointed to hear of the decision by Bodycare.

“We would ask the company that, under the circumstances, it reconsider this to allow the poppy as an exception.”

The Evening Post contacted Bodycare stores in Lancaster, Chorley and the company-owned Grahams shop in Preston.

A worker at the Preston store said: “You need to go to the head office. We are not supposed to wear anything apart from the uniform you get.”

A worker in Lancaster refused to comment while the Chorley office did not respond.

A spokesman for GR and MM Blackledge, Bodycare’s parent company, said: “Employees are only allowed to wear their uniform and charitable pins would not be considered part of the uniform and they would not be allowed to wear them.

“They (staff) have all been spoken to about the situation and are quite happy about the outcome.”