

# British Parachute Association

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## Communications Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on

**Tuesday 6 December 2011 at 1300**

at the BPA Office, 5 Wharf Way, Glen Parva, Leicester LE2 9TF

|                             |                     |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>Present:</b>             | Adrian Bond         | - | Communications Chairman                       |
|                             | Paul Applegate      |   |   |
|                             | Kieran Brady        |   | (from item 58)                                |
|                             | Alex Busby          |   |   |
|                             | Craig Poxon         |   |   |
| <b>In attendance:</b>       | Sue Allen           | - | Membership Services (for part of item 51)     |
|                             | Liz Ashley          |   | Editor, Skydive Magazine                      |
|                             | Adam Browning       | - | Archant Dialogue                              |
|                             | Tony Butler         | - | Technical Officer                             |
|                             | Karey Goodwin       | - | Membership Services                           |
|                             | Jon Gretton         | - | Financial Administrator (for part of item 51) |
|                             | Trudy Kemp          | - | PA to TO/NCSO (for part of item 51)           |
|                             | John Page           | - | (from item 45.4)                              |
|                             | Martin Shuttleworth | - | Secretary-General                             |
|                             | Phil Sumner         | - | Archant Dialogue                              |
| <b>Apology for absence:</b> | John Hitchen        | - | NCSO  |
| <b>Observers:</b>           | Karen Bain          | - | Council 2012 candidate                        |
|                             | James Swallow       | - | Council 2012 candidate                        |

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## Item Minute

### 56/11 Minutes

The Committee noted that the minutes (circulated) of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 October 2011 had already been approved by the Committee, ratified electronically by the Council and published on the BPA website <http://www.bpa.org.uk/minutes>

### 57/11 Matters arising

#### 57.1 Logs of Mag downloads (minute 45.2)

Craig Poxon said he had not received the log of Mag downloads for the past month. Phil Sumner (Archant Dialogue) said he would arrange for Craig Poxon to access the statistics direct over the Internet. He said the pattern of downloads had remained similar to that reported previously.

***Action: Archant Dialogue (Phil Sumner)***

#### 57.2 Mag website (minute 45.3)

As agreed at the last meeting, the listing date had been replaced by the event date in the events zone section of the front page of the Mag website; and the next three upcoming events in the calendar were now automatically listed there.

***Completed***

#### 57.3 BPA vinyl promotional banners (minute 45.5)

Notes on the BPA meeting for Drop Zone Operators, held on Tuesday 1 November 2011 at Waltham Village Hall, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, had been circulated with the agenda.

The Chairman of Council, who had chaired the meeting for DZOs, had asked whether each DZ would like a BPA vinyl banner, without charge. Those present had agreed that this would be a

good idea. The meeting had noted that some DZs had previously purchased a BPA vinyl banner. They would be offered the option of a second banner free of charge, or a refund of what they had paid.

**Action: Communications Chairman**

**57.4 Map of Affiliated Centres for display at UK wind tunnels (minute 48)**

John Page reported that he was progressing new maps of BPA Affiliated Clubs & Centres for display at the Bedford, Manchester and Milton Keynes wind tunnels. He said that the frames were the most expensive parts.

**Action: John Page**

**58/11 Editorial Report**

Adam Browning (Assistant Editor, Skydive the Mag, Archant Dialogue), reported that there had been a few teething problems on the handover from his predecessor Kirsty Kelly, but these had all been worked through. He said there would be a slight re-design of the next issue in February 2012 and this would be improved further with a planned re-design for 2012. Advertising income for the December issue, at just over £14K, had been below the £16K target, probably due to the time of year and the general economic downturn. The calendar had brought in £6K of advertising.

**59/11 Complimentary Mag mailing list**

Liz Ashley (Editor, Skydive the Mag) had already circulated by e-mail the final, slimmed-down, complimentary Mag mailing list as agreed at the last meeting (minute 59). Also as agreed then, she had written to those who had previously been on the list but were no longer, to say that the complimentary list was being revised, and to invite them to subscribe. The Chairman noted that, now the Mag was available online at no charge, it may affect subscriptions.

**Completed**

**60/11 BPA e-Newsletter**

Craig Poxon reported that the read rate for the November 2011 BPA e-Newsletter had shown a slight improvement to 52%.

He said that the contractor he was using to transmit the newsletter, CTT, specialised in providing a service to third-sector membership bodies. It had offered two free-of-charge surgeries, one of which he had recently attended. At this, CTT had said they considered a 52% read rate to be towards the top end of typical expectations. They had suggested use of 'above the fold' links in the e-Newsletter - links at the top to items lower down on the page - might help to get more reads. This had been incorporated in the November BPA e-Newsletter. They had also covered subject line testing and behavioural segmentation by postcode, which were possibly of less immediate application to us. However, the idea of having a page on the BPA website to sign up to receive the BPA e-Newsletter, possibly with the offer of some sort of reward or competition, was something that Craig Poxon believed might be worth this Committee considering when formulating next year's Communications Action Plan.

**Bring forward for Action Plan 2012/3 at to February 2012 meeting**

Other possibilities included sending e-mails of welcome to new members, linking e-mails to social networking, and an SMS tool to contact members who had not yet provided an e-mail address to the BPA.

Craig Poxon said he looked forward to attending the second free seminar in due course. The Chairman thanked him for his report and said it had included good substance not just of new ways to communicate, but to help to extend the reach of the sport.

**61/11 New BPA online database**

Phil Sumner (Web Developer, Archant Dialogue) reported that he had encountered a stumbling block in trying to replicate the functionality of the existing BPA database, which had been written by Mike Gorman, and that was used by the BPA Office for a range of administrative purposes. Staff had raised concerns about switching from a tried and trusted desktop database to a new online version. However, such a switch was not yet practicable because, although the new database had full online functionality for renewals, to date it had only about 85% of the wider range of functionality used by the Office.

Following the meeting of the Chairman and the Secretary-General at Archant Dialogue on 24 November (minute 62), Tony Butler (Technical Officer) had sent Phil Sumner contact details for Mike Gorman with a view to their liaising to seek an arrangement whereby the new online system could communicate with the existing database at the BPA Office. This would enable certain online renewals to take place, whilst at the same time allowing the Office to continue to use the full range of functionality of the existing database until it could all be replicated in the new one. A transition phase would then follow, with parts of the old system being decommissioned as the new system was able progressively to take over. Mike Gorman's assistance would be essential for this plan to work because only he held the code that created the current BPA desktop database. Providing Mike Gorman's assistance could be secured, Phil Sumner said he hoped to be able to put in the necessary 2-way communication arrangement before 24 December.

Tony Butler (Technical Officer) said that the staff were becoming increasingly concerned about the proximity of the next renewals period, which effectively began once the subscription rates for the new membership year had been decided at the AGM. There would realistically be little or no staff capacity to pilot a new system once the build-up to the peak renewals period had started. The staff did not believe they had yet been adequately consulted to assure a smooth and effective migration between the current database and the new one, and this had added to their misgivings.

John Page reported that the new hardware and software that comprised renewal of the office computer system (reference minute 68.2.3 of the Council meeting held on 11 October 2011) would present staff with a steep learning curve from the current, dated, system. He therefore believed it to be important not to present BPA staff with two new challenges at once, the new computer system *and* the new database. Rather, they had to be phased. That said, the suppliers of the new computer system, Computerlink (Leicester), had highlighted that there was an issue about getting the current database, written by Mike Gorman, to work on the new computer system. This would need to be resolved before the new hardware and software could be installed.

Tony Butler then invited BPA staff to join the meeting: Sue Allen and Karey Goodwin from Membership Services; Jon Gretton, Financial Administrator; and Trudy Kemp., PA to the TO/NCSO. A further discussion ensued in which staff expressed their concern that December was too late to begin testing for the next renewals period, and Phil Sumner explained the challenge he was faced with of trying to replicate a system that he did not have programming access to, and could not adapt.

Kieran Brady said that the integrity the database to support staff in carrying out the range of BPA membership and administrative functions had to be maintained as this was a core function of the BPA Office. Only when this was secure should the system be extended with the additional functionality to support online renewals. Tony Butler said the staff believed the process to have begun at the wrong end - starting by facilitating online renewals rather than starting by replicating the functionality of the existing database as used by the Office. John Page reflected that Council Members had driven the process whereas perhaps it would have been better done by the staff.

The Chairman asked Phil Sumner kindly to try again to contact Mike Gorman and, following discussion with him, to report back within the next two weeks with a timeline to include a demonstration of the new system to BPA staff.

**Action: Archant Dialogue (Phil Sumner)**

Meanwhile, subject to the technical issue being solved (by equipment suppliers Computerlink) to enable the current BPA database to run on the new computer system, the new computer hardware and software would be installed at the BPA Office during the week beginning Monday 12 December.

**Action: BPA Office / Computerlink**

Those staff who had attended specifically for this item then left the meeting.

**62.1 Enhance media and public relations**

The Chairman and Secretary-General had visited Archant Dialogue on Thursday 24 November to progress this target of improving PR and media contacts around the BPA, Clubs & Centres and the sport in general.

Zoë Francis-Cox, Editorial Director of Archant Dialogue, had been extremely helpful in suggesting a number of initiatives in which Archant Dialogue could help. These included people-centred double-page features on local skydivers in Archant's lifestyle magazines, some 32 of which were published, mostly for particular counties or regions. Each such article might include a fact box on skydiving, together with contact details of the local DZs. If DZs were willing to donate a free jump, a prize might be associated with such a feature, which Archant confidently expected would engage readers. In all, the range of Archant lifestyle magazines were read by some half a million people each month, and the value of the pages in monetary terms was reckoned to total something over £40K.

Another suggestion by Archant Dialogue was to run feature articles on skydiving in their specialist magazines for photographers and pilots, each taking the specialism of the magazine as a perspective on skydiving.

Further ideas by Archant Dialogue were the possibility of offering subscriptions to 'Skydive the Mag' via a commercial website called Subscription Save, 'Skydive the Mag' as an iPad app edition, and a Smartphone app for members to upload skydiving photos to the Mag website, Facebook, etc.

The Chairman said these were exciting ideas to be considered by next year's Committee for the Communications Action Plan 2012-3.

**Bring forward for Action Plan 2012/3 at to February 2012 meeting**

**62.2 Celebrate the BPA's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1961-2011**

- BPA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary car stickers had been issued in the summer. **Completed**
- The well-received series of five articles would continue in the Mag, looking at the history of British skydiving in each of the BPA's five decades to date. The February 2012 Mag would include the last article in this series, on skydiving in the first decade of the new millennium.

**Action: Editor**

- An outline mock-up of the Chairmen's Honours Board was displayed. R D 'Dare' Wilson, Chairman from 1962-6, had held two military ranks during his period as BPA Chairman. There was some discussion about how most appropriately to show these ranks on the honours board. The meeting decided that the best way would be to ask Dare Wilson himself, and the Office would arrange to do this.

**Action: BPA Office**

**62.3 Run an online BPA membership survey in spring 2012**

The survey would be drafted nearer the time. **Bring forward to February 2012 meeting**

**62.4 Research costs and issues in building a digital archive of the BPA Mag and, possibly, BPA minutes**

Craig Poxon had reported to the last meeting (minute 51.4) that this target was on hold for the time being because of cost issues until technology moved forward. He was, however, continuing to review possible options to meet the target.

The Office suggested that it might be appropriate to digitise the master copies of BPA minutes as these were held in paper form and it was foreseeable that, in the event for example of a fire at the office, they could be destroyed. Only sets of minutes written after about 1999 or 2000 were comprehensively stored on the BPA computer system. After discussion, the Committee agreed that the Office should obtain quotes for, and progress, this work. Craig Poxon said that the twin processes of document imaging and scanning for optical character recognition would be likely to

produce the most robust output for archive purposes. The Office said would liaise with him over this project.

**Action: BPA Office**

**63/11 AGM**

**63.1 Reebok Stadium, Bolton, Saturday 28 January 2012**

The Chairman reported that the AGM Working Party had met this morning, including a meeting with the audio visual contractors, to progress plans for the BPA AGM to be held on Saturday 28 January 2012 at De Vere Whites, Reebok Stadium, Bolton, Greater Manchester BL6 6SF. The working party would also be meeting on site with the event co-ordinator at De Vere Whites this Thursday, 8 December, for a planning update.

The intention was to stream the AGM live over the Internet for the benefit of members who could not attend. Craig Poxon asked Alex Busby to help to find volunteers with hardware to video the afternoon seminars that were not taking place in the main room.

The Chairman reported that selected alcoholic drinks at the bars would be available for £2.50 a glass. He said that tickets for the BPA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Dinner were selling well, and if the present trend continued the number of covers for dinner could be around 200+. The maximum capacity of the room was 300. The eight remaining Golden Tickets for a year's free BPA Membership would be raffled by a dinner ticket tombola of those attending the dinner. There would be optional fancy dress in the theme of 'Bond and his Baddies' with prizes for the best. There would also be a return of the fun casino tables that proved popular at the last AGM. As always, the dinner would be followed by the always-popular disco.

Exhibition space was selling well too. De Vere Whites Hotel was now reported fully booked for the Saturday night, but other local accommodation was available, further information was on the BPA website.

**On target**

**63.2 Saturday 26 January 2013**

The contract to hold the AGM 2013 at the Leicester Marriott Hotel had now been signed.

**On target**

**64/11 BPA membership card 2012**

The Committee selected an image, from four kindly chosen by the Editor as possible for use on the BPA membership card for the new 2012/3 membership year.

**65/11 Chairman's thanks**

The Chairman thanked the Committee for its hard work during another busy year. A lot of work remained outstanding as there were a number of initiatives going forward into next year, to build further on what had already been achieved. In all, it had been a good, positive year, for which he thanked all who had played a part.

**66/11 Date of next meeting**

To be arranged, at 1300 on the same day as Council meetings 2012 (to be agreed at the inaugural meeting of Council 2012, held immediately after the AGM and presentation ceremony).

The meeting closed at 1445.