

# British Parachute Association

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## Communications Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on

**Tuesday 17 April 2007 at 1400**

at the BPA Offices, 5 Wharf Way, Glen Parva, Leicester

<b>Present:</b>	Adrian Bond Paul Applegate Robin Durie Eddie Jones Paul Ledden Paul Moore Grant Richards	Communications Chairman (from item 15.5)  (from item 15.5) Chairman of Council  Co-opted (see minute 11)
<b>In attendance:</b>	Kieran Brady Tony Butler John Horne David Ibbotson Ian Marshall David Hickling John Hitchen John Page  Martin Shuttleworth Weed Stoodley	(from item 15.5) Co-opted Technical Officer  (from item 17) Chairman, Insurance Subcommittee NCSO (from item 15.2) Competitions Chairman & Vice Chairman of Council Secretary-General (from item 15.2)
<b>Apologies for absence:</b>	Lesley Gale Mike Rust Alex Wilson	Editor, <i>Skydive Magazine</i>
<b>Observer:</b>	Craig Poxon	(from item 15.5)

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### Item Minute

**10/07 Minutes**

Paul Moore proposed, and Paul Ledden seconded, a motion that the minutes of the Communications Committee meeting held on Tuesday 13 February 2007 should be approved as a correct record.

***Approved***

**11/07 Composition**

Paul Ledden proposed, and David Ibbotson seconded, a motion that Grant Richards should be co-opted to join this Committee.

***Carried unanimously***

**12/07 Matters arising**

**12.1 Unauthorised use of the BPA logo by the Extreme Sports Café website**  
**[www.extremesportscafe.com](http://www.extremesportscafe.com) (minute 4.3)**

Martin Shuttleworth apologised that, due to staff shortage in the BPA Office, he had unfortunately not yet had time to progress the action at minute 38/06, but would do so as soon as normal staffing was restored.

***Action: BPA Office***

### **12.2 Mailsort (minute 4.5)**

Martin Shuttleworth reported that Lesley Gale had arranged for Mike Gorman, computer programmer, to visit the BPA Office to resolve the problem with the Mailsort program, which had indeed proved to be a technical issue. The problem had been cleared, and the Mailsort run to generate address information for distribution of the April 2007 issue of the Magazine had run correctly. The data generated had met the Royal Mail's Pricing in Proportion criteria.

**Resolved**

### **12.3 Promotional poster (minute 6.4)**

The Development Committee had organised a meeting for Drop Zone Operators on Thursday 12 April at which the new BPA promotional posters for skydiving had been advertised. Sample copies had also been available for Drop Zones to take away with them.

### **12.4 BPA website (minute 7.3)**

The coaching webpage on the BPA website, which had attracted disappointingly few questions, had now been taken down, as agreed at the last meeting.

**Completed**

### **12.5 Links between the BPA and BCPA (minute 8)**

Links to BCPA member clubs had now been added to the links page on the BPA website. Future development of the BPA website was to be discussed later in the meeting (minute 15.4).

However, the Office suggested that the BCPA member clubs might better be displayed on a map of the UK – similar to the BPA Affiliated Clubs & Centres page – rather than on the 'links' page. In discussion, the Committee considered that other recognised UK parachuting societies, namely POPS (UK) [for parachutists over 40] and SOS [Skydivers over Sixty] should, subject of course to their agreement, also feature on that page. David Ibbotson proposed, and Paul Moore seconded, a motion to construct a new page on the BPA website for recognised UK parachuting societies, subject to any decision that may be taken later in this meeting about the future development of the BPA website (minute 15.4).

**Carried unanimously**

[**Note:** No action has yet been taken on this, consequent on the planned update to the design of the whole of the BPA website recorded in minute 15.4.]

### **13/07 Editorial Report**

The Committee had not received an Editorial Report to this meeting from Lesley Gale. The Committee asked that such a report should be submitted even when Lesley Gale had tendered her apologies for absence, as she had for today's meeting.

**Action: Lesley Gale**

See also minute 17: April 2007 issue of *Skydive Magazine*.

### **14/07 Communications Action Plan: 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007**

The Chairman noted that the Communications Action Plan for the year ending on 30 June 2007 had already been successfully completed, and he thanked all who had been involved for their valued contribution towards achieving this positive result.

There remained one item outstanding from the 2005/6 Communications Action Plan, reference minute 31.2/06 from the Communications Committee meeting held on 10 October 2006. This was to run a competition in the Magazine further to improve reader interaction. The minute recorded that Lesley Gale had reported that her contact at Olympus Cameras, with whom she was hoping to negotiate the donation of a prize for a photography competition to run in *Skydive Magazine*, had gone on a six month sabbatical.

The Chairman asked that Lesley Gale should kindly give an update at the next meeting.

**Action: Lesley Gale**

### **15/07 Communications Action Plan: 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008**

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Action Plan 2007/8 was not, as previous Action Plans had been, a bid document. Rather, it was to be submitted to UK Sport as part of the compliance requirements for UK Sport's already-confirmed exchequer funding grant to the BPA of £25K.

To meet the timetable required by UK Sport, and to have in place a finalised Action Plan in time for the start of the year on 1 July 2007, it was necessary for this Committee to recommend the Communications Action Plan for approval by the full Council at its meeting tonight.

### **15.1 e-commerce on the Magazine website**

Magazine subscriptions were successfully being sold on the Magazine website. This was the BPA's first venture into e-commerce. The Committee was aware that Lesley Gale had suggested that consideration be given to extending this. The Committee discussed the possibility of selling photographs that had appeared in the Magazine, and/or back issues, online through the Magazine website. The question about promotion of the Magazine website as an e-commerce platform was whether it would be cost effective in terms of the development costs, given that the number of orders was expected to be relatively small (online subscriptions to the Magazine were running at an average of about 18 per month).

David Ibbotson said there were probably thousands of skydiving photographs in the Magazine's photographic library, for which he was sure there would be a demand. That said, he was aware that considerable work would be involved in establishing and servicing an online photographic sales facility, and that there were issues of copyright and how the photographers would benefit. Paul Moore said that *Soldier Magazine* had an online photographic sales facility, and he believed that when a photograph was sold, the Magazine and the photographer each received a percentage from the sale.

The Chairman said that Lesley Gale's input would be welcome at the next meeting; meanwhile David Ibbotson agreed to investigate further and report back to the next meeting.

**Action: Lesley Gale & David Ibbotson**

David Ibbotson then proposed, and Paul Ledden seconded, a motion that a target in the Communications Action Plan for 2007/8 should be a cost/benefit analysis of the further development of e-commerce on the Magazine website. Budget: £750.

**Carried unanimously**

### **15.2 Closer liaison with UKS website**

Paul Moore reported that the BPA Matters forum on the UKS website - [www.ukskydiver.co.uk](http://www.ukskydiver.co.uk) - was active, and that postings were not anonymous and the Forum was moderated, which marked it as superior to other online skydiving chat rooms or discussion groups. Liaison with UKS was continuing about the possibility of the UKS BPA Matters forum having a validation gateway for BPA Members to sign in online. Martin Shuttleworth said that a similar system, based on the 'Member Check' facility on the BPA website, was already being successfully used by Members responding to the BPA's online classified advertisers.

Paul Moore outlined the key points in a paper to the Committee (already circulated) from Stu Ferguson of the UKS website. This suggested the publication of an article on site and in *Skydive Magazine* about the BPA Forum on UKS; the reproduction on UKS of BPA minutes after publication; the timely release of BPA news and information to UKS; and that UKS should be allowed to cover forthcoming BPA elections, etc, on condition that it remained impartial.

Tony Butler urged caution about the BPA supplying official information to a third party website over which it had no control. He believed it would be better for UKS to link to the BPA website, which he believed should remain the official, authoritative and primary source of BPA information.

Paul Moore suggested that things should be left as they were for the time being, with the BPA Matters forum on UKS remaining as an unofficial forum, to see how it panned out. Paul Moore then proposed, and David Ibbotson seconded, a motion that closer liaison between the BPA and the UK Skydiver website should *not* be included as a target in the Communications Action Plan 2007/8, but that the Committee should re-visit the issue in October 2007.

**Carried unanimously – Bring forward at October 2007 meeting**

### **15.3 Electronic Membership Survey**

The Chairman suggested that the previous two BPA Membership Survey Questionnaires should be reviewed and distributed to relevant BPA Committees with a request to help to produce an

up-to-date and more rounded questionnaire to be put to Members electronically. The Chairman kindly agreed to provide an online questionnaire system, which offered electronic analysis that he used in his own workplace. Paul Moore proposed, and Paul Ledden seconded, a motion to proceed with this as a Communications Action Plan target for 2007/8 with a budget of £250.

**Carried unanimously**

#### **15.4 Enhancement of the BPA website**

The BPA website had been the subject of criticism on the BPA Matters forum on UKS. A number of posters of messages on UKS had said they considered the BPA website to be uninspiring, dated, and pointed out that it did not function properly on the browser Firefox. The functionality problem was most apparent in relation to the top navigation bar on the BPA website. The Office said that the top navigation bar, which nobody at all seemed to like (ZCT, the BPA's web consultants and the BPA Office disliked it too), was a legacy from when the website had first been constructed in the late 1990s. The Development Committee had considered that the cost-benefit case to replace the top navigation bar had been unconvincing at the time the BPA website had moved to new hosts as a result of the Committee's appointment of its then new web consultants (ZCT) in or about 2001.

The costs for a revamp of the BPA website, which would include making it compatible with Firefox browsers, was estimated to be around £4K.

A number of significant potential website developments had been flagged up recently, such as the introduction of a facility for online renewals and electronic voting in Council elections. Robin Durie said he believed it was time to take the plunge because it was only delaying the inevitable by not progressing these key areas.

The Committee also noted that comments had been made about the current design of the BPA website being dated and that a new, fresh, more aesthetically pleasing design should be commissioned. However, the Committee recognised that design and aesthetics was far more subjective than functionality. A design that one person liked, another might dislike. There was also the issue about design vogues that might quickly date – a redesigned BPA website would be around for the foreseeable future so had to be of a durable design that would stay the course.

Since the Membership appeared to be bubbling with ideas and suggestions about how the BPA website might be re-designed, John Page suggested that a competition might be held for Members to re-design the front-end of the BPA website. In discussion, the Committee decided that the competition would not include the back-end or functionality of the website, although it would include what the website should be able to do in terms of service delivery. The Committee could then take the winning design to a professional website company as a basis to translate into a new design for the BPA website, together with the back-end engineering by the Development Committee to make it work. Entries would be requested on a CD. The competition winner would of course be acknowledged on the new website. The prize for winning the competition would be a year's free BPA Membership (this being something for which one Member who had offered to re-design the BPA website had asked for in return).

The Chairman said this appeared to be a good way forward and commended the idea of involving the Membership. Paul Moore with the Chairman volunteered to draft the guidelines for the competition.

**Action: Paul Moore & Chairman**

Paul Ledden then proposed, and David Ibbotson seconded, a motion to include as a target in the Communications Action Plan 2007/8 to hold a competition for Members to design the front-end of a new look BPA website, and to use this as the basis for a professionally-updated site. Budget: £250 for feasibility study (which did not include the estimated cost of £4K for implementing a website upgrade).

**Carried unanimously**

#### **15.5 Produce a skydiving DVD**

Paul Ledden reported that he had written to the editors of *Maxim* and *FHM* magazines to suggest the publication of a promotional DVD about skydiving to be distributed with the magazine as a free gift. He was planning to make a similar offer to two appropriate women's magazines. His proposal to the magazines was to produce the DVD as a joint venture between the magazine and the BPA. The benefit for the magazine would be to inspire its readers and attract new ones,

and for the BPA it would help to attract newcomers to the sport. Paul Ledden said he understood that mass-produced DVDs could cost as little as 17p each. He emphasised that this was purely a feasibility study at this stage.

Paul Ledden then proposed, and David Ibbotson seconded, a motion that a target to be included in the Communications Action Plan 2007/8 should be a feasibility study into producing and distributing a DVD on skydiving as a joint venture with a commercial magazine. Budget: £250.

**Carried unanimously**

#### **15.6 BPA skydiving calendar 2008**

Paul Moore proposed, and David Ibbotson seconded, a motion that a target to be included in the Communications Action Plan 2007/8 should be to publish a BPA Skydiving calendar in 2008 (to be issued free-of-charge to Members as an insert to the December 2007 issue of *Skydive Magazine*). The cost of £2K would be covered by advertisement sales, so this target would not require any additional budget.

**Carried unanimously**

#### **15.7 Recommendation of Action Plan to the full Council**

The Chairman thanked all who had made an input to the formulation of the Communications Action Plan 2007/8 and said he would draw this up in the form of a matrix with the help of the BPA Office. The matrix would then be tabled for approval by the full Council at its meeting tonight.

**Action: Chairman**

#### **16/07 Staff paper on BPA communications strategy**

Prompted by the debate about the publication of certain letters in the BPA Magazine, the staff had written a paper for the Committee on 'BPA Communications Strategy' and, with the Chairman's agreement, had circulated this to the Committee. The stated aim of the paper was to set out a robust structure of responsibilities and accountabilities that would apply irrespective of who held a particular office or post at any given time. The Chairman thanked the staff for the paper, which raised a number of important issues for the Committee to consider. As Lesley Gale was not present, the Chairman did not wish to delay the process of debate on this important matter, and therefore suggested that initial feedback be minuted to allow momentum and for continuation at the next meeting when it was expected that Lesley Gale would be present.

One of the issues raised by the paper was the interpretation of a particular sentence in the BPA's Editorial Services Contract with Lesley Gale. This was item 10.1 in the contract, and it read: "The Editor is to ensure that the content of the Magazine must be representational of the whole membership over the period of the contract." This could be read, quite reasonably, in two different ways. Lesley Gale was interpreting it to mean that it was the Magazine's duty to give voice to the Membership, including Members who have a problem with particular Council Members, or with the Council's policy or actions. The wording of item 10.1 in the contract was, however, equally capable of being interpreted to mean that the Editor was to ensure that all disciplines of the sport, and all special interest groups within the sport, are represented in the Magazine broadly in line with their participation rates in, or significance to, the sport. Kieran Brady said that, as the person who had been responsible for drawing up the contract some years ago, he could confirm that it was the second meaning, about representation across all of the disciplines and interests within the sport, that had been intended.

The Chairman thanked Kieran Brady for this clarification, and said that the contract had proved to be a helpful and robust document. He asked Kieran Brady if he could please re-visit the form of words used in item 10.1 with a view to expressing the original intention without leaving any alternative interpretations, and Kieran Brady agreed to do this.

**Action: Kieran Brady**

There followed a discussion about the editorial column on page 1 of each issue of *Skydive Magazine*. Kieran Brady said that, in his view, the purpose of an editorial column was to help readers to navigate through that issue of the Magazine. However, he feared that the editorial column was being used as a tool to promote the Editor's own personal opinions including those on political issues. He said that he believed it was inappropriate that the editorial column should be used for political purposes.

Weed Stoodley said she had been saddened to see what she perceived as an ongoing push in the last two issues of the Magazine. She believed that something had gone adrift, as a particular point of view appeared to be being promoted under what some might see as almost a 'freedom fighter' approach. Weed Stoodley said she well understood the argument about editorial freedom, but it went hand-in-hand with editorial responsibility. She said that the Editor did a fantastic job and regularly produced an excellent magazine: that was not at issue. What she believed needed to be addressed was that the Magazine appeared to have become political, stemming from an issue at the inaugural Council meeting. Paul Ledden saw it as justified reporting, and said it was not the Editor who had started what was now being seen by some as a problem, but the Council itself.

Paul Applegate said that in the case of national newspapers, editorial columns reflected whatever political side the newspaper was on. It was the newspaper's publisher who paid the editor's wages. With the BPA Magazine, he said it had to be 'see-through'. Because it was the BPA's Magazine, it should reflect the BPA's views rather than the Editor's personal views, which might sometimes differ.

The Chairman of Council said that about 18 months ago, there had been a problem with the Club News Editorial, which some Members of the Council had seen as defamatory. The item in question had been written by the Editorial Assistant. The Chairman of Council said that even though he accepted that it had not been written with the intention of being defamatory, the nature of its subject matter - standing for election to the Council - made it almost inevitable that it would be so received. This had been a case in point that had demonstrated why editorials should avoid topics that could render them being seen as political statements.

Paul Moore said that the Magazine was the official journal of the BPA and the Council needed to be the ultimate arbiter of what it contained, because at the end of the day it was a BPA publication and the Council was responsible for it.

The Committee was strongly in favour of retaining the letters page in the Magazine. However, it recognised that web-based discussion forums such as the BPA Matters forum on UKS (minute 15.2) might be more appropriate for some types of comment. This was because it was not an official BPA channel of communication, it was more immediate, and it allowed many Members to participate in a discussion.

The Chairman emphasised that it was important to consider these issues with Lesley Gale, Editor, at the next meeting. He said it would be desirable to set out the chain of responsibility and accountability for the Magazine so that the relationships of the various parties were clear. This included clear identification of the publisher, ownership of the title *Skydive Magazine*, ownership of the copyright of the Magazine, and who carried ultimate responsibility for what was published, including the cost and beneficiaries of libel insurance. This would help not least in the event that the Magazine faced issues about coverage of controversial subjects in the future.

**Action: Next meeting**

**17/07 April 2007 issue of Skydive Magazine**

The Committee noted two issues about the April issue to raise with Lesley Gale at the next meeting. These were (1) the question of suitability of the design of the advertisement on page 50 which featured a condom; and (2) the article on wind tunnels, about which two DZ Operators had asked why the Magazine was publishing articles about wind tunnels rather than BPA Affiliated Drop Zones. The Chairman of Council said that any article about wind tunnels should be run past the Communications Committee before publication.

**Action: Next meeting**

**18/07 Dates of next meetings**

Tuesdays at 1400 at the BPA Office, Leicester: 12 June, 14 August, 9 October and 4 December 2007.

The meeting closed at 1558.

Ratified by the Council on 12 June 2007

Distribution: Council, Vice Presidents, Treasurer, Staff and Editor