

British Parachute Association

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Communications Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on

Tuesday 19 February 2008 at 1400

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

Present:	Adrian Bond Paul Applegate David Ibbotson Paul Moore John Page Craig Poxon Grant Richards	Communications Chairman Development Chairman
In attendance:	Tony Butler Debbie Carter Lesley Gale John Hitchen David Hickling John Horne Paul Ledden Helen Lucas Ian Marshall John Smyth Martin Shuttleworth Martin Soulsby Weed Stoodley	Technical Officer Treasurer (from item 8) Editor, <i>Skydive Magazine</i> NCSO (from item 6) Vice Chairman of Council (from item 6) (from item 6) Membership Services (from item 6) Chairman of Council (from item 6) Secretary-General Co-opted (from item 4.2)
Observer:	Kieran Brady	

Item Minute

01/08 Composition

Adrian Bond, who had been voted to the Office of Communications Chairman at the inaugural Council meeting on Saturday 12 January 2008 (Council minute 1.5/08), welcomed those present to this first formal meeting of the Communications Committee 2008.

Consequent on Council's decision on Committee composition (minute 48/07 of the Council meeting held on 12 June 2007 refers), no Committee could have a voting majority on Council, which meant that the number of voting members on the Committee was limited to six plus the Chair.

The voting members of the Committee were: Paul Applegate, David Ibbotson, Paul Moore, John Page, Craig Poxon and Grant Richards, together with the Chairman who had a casting vote.

The Committee confirmed the standing co-option of Lesley Gale, Editor of *Skydive the Mag*, ex-officio as a non-voting member of the Committee.

Craig Poxon proposed, and John Page seconded, a motion to co-opt Martin Soulsby as a non-voting Member of the Committee.

Carried unanimously

Appropriate BPA staff also attended meetings to advise and service the Committee.

02/08 Terms of reference

The Committee noted its terms of reference (BPA Form 191, issue 2, September 2000), which had been circulated with the agenda.

03/08 Minutes

Grant Richards proposed, and Paul Moore seconded, a motion that the minutes of the Communications Committee meeting held on Tuesday 4 December 2007 should be approved as a correct record.

Approved

04/08 Matters arising

4.1 Editorial services contract (minute 47)

The Chairman reported that he and Lesley Gale had now agreed on the contract wording, which he had circulated to the Committee in advance. Chris Allen, a Vice President, had read the statement in minute 47.1 that 'It was ... demonstrably a contract for services, not a contract of employment'. He had said he believed that the Committee had missed a number of important factors, such as who took the financial risk, in coming to this bold statement. He had sent the Chairman a relevant leaflet from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and urged the use of HMRC's online Employment Status Indicator or that the BPA should seek written advice from HMRC. He was not suggesting that the Committee had got it wrong, but that it would be sensible and appropriate for all parties to secure some collaborative evidence.

Lesley Gale believed that the contract wording already adequately covered her status as a self-employed contractor. As regards financial risk, this was demonstrated in many areas including the fact that she had her own office, expensive equipment, and an employee. In response to a question, Lesley Gale replied that she also undertook small contracting jobs for other clients on occasion, which further confirmed her self-employed status.

The Chairman said that it would be appropriate to sign the Editorial Services Contract today, with a side letter stating that the contract was subject to confirmation by HMRC of Lesley Gale's status as self-employed. The contract ran to 30 September 2008. Lesley Gale acknowledged the time that the Chairman had spent on discussing and formulating the contract. The Chairman said that it would be important to start discussions earlier this year on the next contract, which would run from 1 October 2008, so that the next contract could be signed on time.

Grant Richards suggested that the contract should be extended, and that the next contract should be put out to tender. Paul Moore said that Lesley Gale had a proven track record of consistent delivery of a quality Magazine, and he believed that continuity was important.

In discussion, the Committee considered the merits of an extended contract, and discussed the possible duration, with suggestions ranging from 2 to 4 years. Grant Richards said that the contract fee could be increased by the rate of inflation each year. He suggested that the idea of an extended contract should be discussed this year, with the aim of having an extended contract from 1 October 2008.

Lesley Gale said that the performance incentive in the current contract, which had first been suggested at the last meeting in December 2007, would not be payable until near the end of the present 12-month contract period, because it was based on the outturn of the financial year ending on 30 June 2008. This had begun on 1 July 2007, six months before the start of this decision, when three magazines in this financial year had already been delivered and it would not be wise to rush through any changes for the fourth (February 2008) issue. While she welcomed the concept of performance-based incentives, it was a little late to introduce them two thirds of the way through the financial year, so she hoped the goals she was working towards would not be amended for the following year.

Lesley Gale also said that, although she was content to run with the performance incentive to get this Committee year off to a good start, she did not believe that the remuneration offered by the contract was commensurate with the amount of work its fulfilment involved, nor with the quality of the publications delivered.

Grant Richards suggested that the present contract should be extended until 30 June 2009 in order to include the full 2008/9 financial year (1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009). The performance bonus for this 12-month period would therefore be paid in August 2009.

Grant Richards then proposed, and Paul Moore seconded, a motion that the current contract (to be signed today) should be extended from an annual contract (1 October 2007 to 30 September 2008) to cover the extended period from 1 October 2007 to 30 June 2009 inclusive; and that 6 months before it was due to end, a tender should be put out for the next contract period. This would effectively end the current (previously renewed annually) editorial contract with a termination date agreed of 30 June 2009.

Carried unanimously

4.2 Complimentary Magazine mailing list (minute 48.3)

Lesley Gale had broken down the list into categories, and circulated the list to the Committee in this form in advance of the meeting. The mailing cost of complimentary Magazines was approximately £1,200 per issue, or £10.50 per recipient per year.

Complimentary Magazines were being sent to some overseas Drop Zones. Lesley Gale said that this was to promote overseas sales of the Magazine, since that was where potential growth in subscription sales lay, and to spread news of British skydiving, British athletes and British DZs. She said that this Committee, about three years ago, had been keen to promote the Magazine in Europe and this was part of that effort. Further, although not immediately apparent, some of the complimentary Magazines were provided to very valuable contributors of articles and/or photographs etc. Without the goodwill of these contributors, they may no longer be willing to make an input to the Magazine, which may have a negative impact on the cost of the Magazine.

Grant Richards said that the subscription price cost of the magazines going out was £7K and he believed the complimentary Mag circulation list needed to be significantly pared down. Tony Butler said that when the BPA Office used to send out free Mags, the circulation list had never been more than about 30. He had circulated in advance the list of those the Office believed needed to receive a complimentary Magazine, and there were only 13 names now on the Office's list. By cutting the current list, he estimated that the BPA could save as much as £5K at a stroke. And by sending most of the recipients a subscription form, it might well be possible to generate increased income from subscription sales.

Paul Moore said it was difficult to justify sending 20 or 30 Magazines in bulk to Clubs & Centres - he believed that two or three copies each would be enough. Wind tunnels were also receiving bulk copies. But Weed Stoodley said that it was better for DZs etc to receive copies than have them mouldering in a store, if there was no extra cost.

Tony Butler said it cost nearly £4 to send a Mag by air mail to a distant overseas address. Lesley Gale reported that, from February, she had been trying out ILG Logistics to deliver overseas copies, as it they were 15% cheaper than Royal Mail. She had asked overseas recipients to e-mail her with the date of receipt, to see how the efficiency of their service compared with Royal Mail. Craig Poxon suggested that it might be worth investigating whether Mags to Europe might be cheaper if mailed out from say Holland, as he believed European copies of the USPA Mag were distributed from there.

Action: Lesley Gale

Paul Moore then proposed, and David Ibbotson seconded, a motion to reduce the number of complimentary DZ copies of each issue of the main Magazine, to 3 copies each.

Carried unanimously

A letter would be sent to Clubs & Centres to explain this.

Action: Chairman

Paul Moore next proposed, and Grant Richards seconded, a motion to write to all overseas addressees on the complimentary Magazine mailing list to invite them to subscribe, with a letter explaining the rationale behind the request, and a subscription form. The vote was: For – 5, Abstention – 1 (Craig Poxon).

Carried – Action: Lesley Gale

Paul Moore then proposed, and Grant Richards seconded, a motion to ask Lesley Gale to review the complimentary Magazine mailing list in the light of today's discussion, and to report back to the next meeting with a pared down list.

Carried unanimously

Lesley Gale in turn asked the Committee to consider the protocol for future additions to the mailing list for complimentary copies of the Magazine.

Action: Next meeting

Lesley Gale reported on a suggestion from the Communications Open Forum on AGM Day, that the BPA might supply DZs with Magazine binders so that the timeless educational articles could more easily be accessed by Members. John Page noted that these binders had been available from the BPA Shop for a long time. The Committee decided that the binders should not be given away, but that it would be appropriate for the Chairman to refer to their availability in his letter to DZs.

Action: Chairman

Helen Lucas suggested that it might be appropriate to add a reference to the availability of binders to the Magazine subscription letters sent out by the BPA Office. The Committee agreed.

Action: BPA Office / Lesley Gale

4.3 Starter Magazine (minute 49)

Lesley Gale reported that the new issue was now being printed and that the old stock had now run out. As agreed at the last meeting (minute 49), the new printing carried no advertising for overseas non-Affiliated Drop Zones. This had resulted in a decline in advertising income of some 40%. Fewer advertisements had meant fewer pages, from 68 pages in the last issue to 60 pages in the new one, with the loss of only one editorial page. Fewer pages had led to a reduction in print costs. Lesley Gale said it would be interesting to see whether the fact the Starter Mag no longer carried advertising by overseas non-Affiliated Drop Zones would serve to increase its take up by the few UK DZs that had not taken it before, because of the advertising it now no longer carried.

05/08 Editorial Report

Lesley Gale had circulated her Editorial Report in advance. The Chairman noted that the February issue was the last on which Lucie Fenton had worked as Editorial Assistant. On behalf of the Committee, he thanked Lucie Fenton for her contribution to the Mag and wished her well for the future.

5.1 February 2008 issue - content

5.1 1 New DZ feature

Grant Richards expressed concern at the article by Lesley Gale *A new dawn for Sibson... Reborn as Skydive Airkix* on page 47 appeared to be an advertorial. Weed Stoodley and Paul Applegate said that a number of Members had expressed concern to them about the Mag appearing to give one DZ a leg up. Weed Stoodley said that by running a special article by the Editor rather than including the copy under Club News had given special prominence to one DZ.

Lesley Gale said that it was not an advertorial, since she did not run advertorials in *Skydive the Mag*. It was the start of a new series that she intended to cover all Affiliated Drop Zones. She apologised that she had not included a statement to this effect on page 47. She had started with Skydive Airkix, because it was newsworthy consequent on its change of ownership and name, and the fact it was the first UK DZ to have a formal link with a wind tunnel. In the next issue, Black Knights Parachute Centre would be featured because it was flying a Porter, which was the world meet aircraft this year, and Black Knights would be hosting several UKSL/Grand Prix meets. The order of DZs to be featured in future issues had still to be decided, but would not be alphabetical.

Kieran Brady said that the Committee needed to identify why this new series on DZs had not been included in the Editor's planned content of the February 2008 issue as reported to this Committee at its last meeting. Lesley Gale said that newsworthy content often came up that could not be included in the forward plan.

John Page said that some may take the view that the DZ series was being introduced retrospectively after publication of this article which, although under the Editor's name, bore a strong resemblance to Skydive Airkix's press release. Lesley Gale acknowledged that press release as one of her sources in researching the piece, and said that Skydive Airkix had approached her about running the article.

Grant Richards proposed, and John Page seconded, a motion not to introduce a new feature on DZs, but to put news about DZs in Club News. The vote was: For – 3, Against – 3 and the Chairman made his casting vote to continue with the feature on DZs now that it had been started. The Committee voted by a majority of 3 to 2 that the order in which DZs should be featured would be random, ie drawn out of a hat.

Action: Lesley Gale

5.1.2 Other content

Weed Stoodley said she considered the report on the AGM (pp 21-25) to have been rather disappointing. It had not, for example elaborated on the excellent range of afternoon presentations and the quality of the speakers but had instead found space to criticise the venue and the food at the dinner. Lesley Gale said she had had to obtain this article at short notice, as the one she had been planning to include, from a different contributor, had turned out to be to be far too brief.

5.1.3 Possible change of printer

Lesley Gale reported that, in an effort to cut costs, she had sought quotations from alternative printers and had found one that potentially offered a cost saving of around £1,500 per issue. On advising Warners (the current printers) of this, they had lowered their own quotation in recognition of the value they placed on the BPA's business. They had also made instant reductions to the February 2008 magazine cost based on pre-payment, where Lesley Gale acknowledged the help of the BPA Office, and by using a different paper stock. Warners were therefore now offering a similar saving; it was still a little more expensive at around £400 per issue on print but with many different cost elements to consider. Lesley Gale said she was still in negotiation with Warners and the other printers and would report back.

Action: Lesley Gale

Lesley Gale said that the potential new printers had offered perfect binding at no additional cost though usually this would cost around £700 per issue. Although perfect-bound magazines (which came with a flat spine) had a prestige look, a disadvantage was that they would not open flat, which reduced the impact of spreads across the centre pages.

The Chairman thanked Lesley Gale for the valuable work she was doing to achieve cost savings on printing the Magazine. He confirmed that he had carried out due diligence checks on the potential new printer.

06/08 Communications Action Plan: 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008

6.1 Electronic-Membership Survey Questionnaire

The Chairman reported that the BPA Membership Survey 2008 was now online at the BPA website www.bpa.org.uk and would run until 31 March 2008, after which the results would be published on the BPA website. Already 126 respondents had completed the survey, and the unconstrained comments and suggestions, a printout of which he tabled, were interesting and wide-ranging.

Ongoing

6.2 Study the feasibility of enhancing the BPA website

The Chairman reported that the makeover of the front-end of the BPA website was closely linked with upgrading of the back-end functionality that would be discussed at the meeting of Development Committee that would be held next this afternoon. The target had in fact been achieved, because study of the feasibility of enhancing the website had been completed and a specification for an improved new website had been drawn up. The Development Committee would this afternoon be considering tenders for the work.

Feasibility study achieved

6.3 BPA skydiving calendar 2008

The BPA Skydiving Calendar 2008 had been issued, free-of-charge to Members, as an insert to the December 2007 issue of *Skydive the Mag*.

Achieved

6.4 Trial promotional DVD on skydiving

Paul Ledden had worked hard last year to try to interest a range of general non-skydiving Magazines in this project, but unfortunately none had wished to sponsor a trial promotional DVD for skydiving to be given away as a free gift with their publication.

Not achieved

6.5 Upgrade the Magazine website as a result of a previous feasibility study

This would be progressed in the 2008/9 Action Plan, informed by the results of the Membership Survey 2008 (minute 7.1).

Ongoing

07/08 Communications Action Plan: 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009

The Chairman said that the Communications Action Plan would need to be ready for recommendation to the full Council at its meeting on Tuesday 22 April 2008. This gave today's meeting and the next to formulate appropriate targets. He invited suggestions for targets.

7.1 Amalgamate the BPA and Mag websites

Grant Richards said it would surely be more cost-effective to amalgamate the BPA and Magazine websites, www.bpa.org.uk and www.skydivemag.com. The Committee agreed that this was an appropriate Action Plan target. John Page suggested that the domain 'bpa.org.uk' should also be used to allow Council Members to have their own BPA e-mail address.

7.2 BPA Skydiving Calendar 2009

The Committee decided to continue with the calendar, as it was valued by the Membership.

7.3 Wireless Internet connection in the Board Room

Craig Poxon suggested this target.

7.4 Historical archive project

The Chairman reminded Committee Members of an e-mail (copy circulated) from David Waterman, a life Member of the BPA who lived in Spain and who had attended the AGM and spoken with the Chairman about a project he had in mind.

As a professional photographer, David Waterman had substantial archive photographs from his time as a member of several British teams during the 'seventies, a former BPA Council Member, and Editor of the BPA Magazine for six years during the 'eighties. He had, in effect, a pictorial history of British Sport Parachuting from 1964 to the late 1980s. He had said that if an individual (or two) with appropriate IT skills could be found to spend some time with him in Spain, as his guest/s, he was prepared to supervise the digital archiving of his material, which he believed would be invaluable to the BPA. It might, he believed, perhaps form the basis of an online photographic database available to both the media and the public.

John Smyth (Chairman of Council) said this was a most welcome offer and he hoped the project could be extended to encompass an entire history of sport parachuting in the UK and the BPA, the preparation of which had been an objective of the Council for a decade or more. He believed that a small team of two people would be best suited to achieve this target.

The Communications Chairman agreed that a team of perhaps two people should be sought. The project might be suitable for students, either as work experience or possibly as an educational project. It might be appropriate to consult with BCPA on how to identify suitable individuals.

The Chairman said that all that was needed today was for the Committee to agree that this project should be included as a target in the Action Plan 2008/9, which was duly agreed. The Chairman thanked David Waterman for suggesting it.

08/08 Additional documents on BPA website

Craig Poxon proposed, and Grant Richards seconded, a motion to upload the following documents to the BPA website: (i) BPA Memorandum & Articles of Association; (ii) BPA Accounts; (iii) BPA Action Plan.

Carried unanimously

Craig Poxon asked the Office kindly to review which other current documents, such as BPA Forms, were available but not presently loaded on the BPA website – he cited Form 180 Parachuting for disabled people' as an example.

Action: BPA Office

09/08 UK skydiver website www.UKSkydiver.co.uk

The Chairman said that a number of Members continued to ask, and indeed to expect, some form of acknowledgement by the BPA of the independent website www.UKSkydiver.co.uk, which was a now well-established site run by BPA Members Stu Ferguson and Paul McCormack. The Committee agreed that it would now be appropriate for the BPA to acknowledge UKS as an unofficial, independent, external online forum for skydivers in the UK, whilst at the same time making it clear that the BPA was not responsible for the content of external websites. The acknowledgement could take the form of a link from the BPA website to UKS, and vice versa.

Because of the BPA's responsibilities and accountabilities as the National Governing Body for the sport, and in particular its regulation and its safety, it would be important to maintain a clear distinction between the official BPA website and UKS as an unofficial external website. That said, the Committee welcomed the opportunity that the successful and growing UKS website had opened for improved informal communication among skydivers.

The Chairman would write to UKS to advise them of the Committee's decision.

Action: Chairman

10/08 Policy on use of the BPA logo

Weed Stoodley reported that the policy on use of the BPA logo agreed last year (Form 263) did not cover use of the logo by National Teams. The Chairman referred this to the Competitions Committee for advice.

Refer to Competitions Committee

09/08 Dates of next meetings

Tuesdays at 1400 at the BPA Office, Glen Parva, Leicester: 22 April, 17 June, 19 August, 7 October and 2 December 2008.

The meeting closed at 1627.