

British Parachute Association

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Communications Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
Tuesday 22 April 2008 at 1330
at the BPA Offices, 5 Wharf Way, Glen Parva, Leicester

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Present: | Adrian Bond Paul Applegate David Ibbotson John Page Craig Poxon | Communications Chairman |
| In attendance: | Tony Butler Lesley Gale John Horne Helen Lucas Martin Shuttleworth Martin Soulsby Weed Stoodley | Technical Officer Editor, Skydive Magazine Vice Chairman of Council (from item 14.2) Membership Services Secretary-General Co-opted (from item 15.3) |
| Apologies for absence: | John Hitchen Paul Moore Grant Richards | NCSO |
| Observer: | Kieran Brady | |

Item Minute

10/08 Minutes

After taking in variations requested by Weed Stoodley, John Page proposed, and David Ibbotson seconded, a motion that the minutes of the Communications Committee meeting held on Tuesday 19 February 2008 should be approved as a correct record.

Approved

11/08 Matters arising

11.1 Editorial services contract (minute 4.1)

The Editorial Services Contract for Lesley Gale to provide editorial services for the BPA was now in place until 30 June 2009.

Completed

11.2 Complementary mailing list (minute 4.2)

Lesley Gale had circulated an updated list. She said this was one third of size of the original and the cost of supplying and mailing complimentary copies of the Magazine had been reduced in the same proportion. Lesley Gale had written to those whose names had been taken off the list inviting them to subscribe, and so far one person had taken up this suggestion. The Chairman said that the cost of providing complimentary Magazines to those on the list had now reduced to £2370 a year. He said it was important to remember that it was the membership's money that was paying for this, and we had to justify the expenditure. Martin Soulsby said that the justification was as a showcase, a shop front to British skydivers and British skydiving, and the Committee agreed.

After discussion, the Chairman proposed, and David Ibbotson seconded, a motion to (i) accept the list but ask Lesley Gale kindly to revisit the section for overseas non-Affiliated Drop Zones to see whether any further paring down might be possible.

Carried unanimously

Affiliated Clubs & Centres had been advised that they would now receive three complimentary DZ copies of each issue of the Mag. Clubs & Centres had still to be reminded about the availability of binders, and the Committee asked the Office kindly to arrange this.

Action: BPA Office (Helen Lucas)

The Committee agreed that the complimentary mailing list would be reviewed annually and that any variations to the list should, as a matter of routine procedure, come before the Committee for approval.

Action: Lesley Gale

11.3 New DZ feature (minute 5.1.1)

The Chairman confirmed that the order in which each DZ was selected to feature in this series of articles was based on a random draw at the BPA Office.

11.4 Possible change of printer (minute 5.1.3)

Lesley Gale reported that Warners, the current printers who had done an excellent job over the years, had been able to offer a competitive price that made it difficult to justify the likely upheaval and possible risk of changing printers. Warners also offered a greater range of services than the alternative printers, including free storage of printed materials, which had proved extremely useful for Starter Mags. Lesley Gale had borne down on Magazine print costs by using a slightly lighter weight of paper without compromising quality, taking advantage of a 5% prepayment discount, and strong negotiation that had brought down costs. The Committee thanked Lesley Gale for this achievement.

Stay with existing printer

11.5 Additional documents on BPA website (minute 8)

The Office confirmed that the Memorandum & Articles of Association, Annual Accounts and agendas of next meetings (as available) had now all been uploaded to the BPA website at http://www.bpa.org.uk/council_matters.htm. The Forms page www.bpa.org.uk/forms.htm had also been entirely reviewed and updated, with all Forms now available to download in pdf as well as most as Word documents.

Completed

11.6 Acknowledgement by the BPA of www.UKSkydiver.co.uk (minute 9)

The Chairman had written to UKS to convey the BPA's acknowledgement as set out in minute 8. He confirmed that the BPA's libel insurers had indicated there was no implication for the BPA as UKS was an external site over which the BPA had no control. UKS had been pleased to receive the BPA's acknowledgement.

Completed

12/08 Future editorial services contracts

Lesley Gale asked the Committee kindly to clarify its position on its proposed arrangements for future editorial services contracts upon the expiry of her current contract in June 2009 (minute 11.1). At its last meeting, the Committee had decided that the contract should be put out to tender 6 months before it was due to end (minute 4.1).

The Office noted that the decision to put further editorial services contracts out to tender had been a big decision to take at the first Committee meeting of a new session without the benefit of consultation and discussion over time, or discussion by the full Council.

Lesley Gale said she had no problem with open competition. However, she had concerns about security after 13 years as the Editor of the BPA Magazine and its associated publications. To date, the contract had always been renewed annually and she had been content with this arrangement on the understanding that there had always been a reasonable expectation, on both sides, of renewal. Now that had suddenly changed. This change would inevitably affect Lesley Gale's business planning, because the assumptions on which she had always based her planning were no longer valid.

As an example, Lesley Gale said she presently had a vacancy for an assistant. Her choice of assistant in terms of the skills she would be seeking would be very different for a contract that

might end in June 2009 compared with one that she could expect with some confidence to be renewed each year. There would be less reason now to seek someone to train up to grow with the business, because with uncertainty over future contracts it became more a point of seeking assistance with routine administrative tasks. Equally, Lesley Gale said it would now be inappropriate for her to make any significant capital investment in the Magazine, for instance by way of facilities or equipment at the Magazine office. And she would be obliged to seek to increase the small amount of publishing and coaching work she did for clients other than the BPA in case she lost the contract, and therefore her livelihood, in fourteen months' time.

Lesley Gale said that she supposed the idea of putting the contract out to tender was to seek either a better quality or a lower price than she was able to provide. She wished to state to the Committee that she genuinely believed that to produce the Magazine at a lower cost would mean that its quality would be compromised, and asked if the Committee realised this and if that was what it really wanted?

Lesley Gale also called attention to the fact that she was a Managing Editor. This meant that, in addition to editing the Magazine, she was responsible for managing its design, print, production and distribution. Delivery of these services as an integrated package may have make them appear to be almost automatic. Because she had always delivered this package of services, she believed that the scope of the contract may not immediately be apparent, and it would be important for the BPA's tender document to be clear in stating exactly what it was the BPA required of the successful bidder.

Lesley Gale went on to explain that she had built the existing infrastructure for design, print and distribution of the Magazine and its associated publications from scratch and she could give no assurance that other parties involved would necessarily be available to continue with a different Editor. In any case, a new Editor might reasonably be expected to propose their own arrangements. Lesley Gale said that the existing infrastructure was of her own construction, and that the Committee should not assume that it could necessarily be incorporated in its present form to any new arrangements. She said there was much for the Committee to consider in formulating the tender document. She asked whether the tender document would be published in the Magazine?

The Chairman said that the reason the Committee had decided to put future contracts to tender in order to benchmark the contract. David Ibbotson agreed that it would help to determine the going rate for the job. Lesley Gale said that, with regard to benchmarking, she had obtained information from editors of skydiving magazines in other countries and would be passing this to the Communications Chairman and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council - those who had supplied it had requested that its confidentiality be respected.

John Page said that the Magazine contract had not been singled out for tender, he believed the same ethos should apply to the franchised BPA Shop. He saw it as the Committee's duty to test the contract in the market place to identify any alternatives that may be available so as to be able to assure the membership that the Committee was objectively confident it was delivering best value to the membership. John Page said that he had spoken to many Members about the Magazine. They had seen a competitive tender as a fair and transparent process. John Page said that it was his personal opinion that Lesley Gale would win the next contract, and this view was mirrored around the table.

13/08 Editorial Report

Lesley Gale had circulated her Editorial Report in advance.

13.1 April 2008 issue

The DZ feature in the April issue had comprised an interview by the Communications Chairman with Black Knights Parachute Centre, his local DZ. John Page said that the first article in the series, about Skydive Airkix in the February 2008 issue, had been attributed through a 'by line' to the Editor personally. He said that Members might perceive this to be an unfair advantage to Skydive Airkix. Lesley Gale said it was nothing of the kind, merely a consequence of geography - that she happened to be based nearest to Skydive Airkix and had therefore conducted the interview with them. Over on the other side of the country, the Communications Chairman was based near Black Knights and had therefore been the obvious choice to interview them.

Lesley Gale said she recognised the shortcomings of the article she had written on the launch of Skydive Airkix in the February issue, and apologised for that. She understood that the matter would be further discussed at the Council meeting tonight (Council minute 28.1 refers). Lesley Gale's report had included an update on financial performance that had included the February Magazine, but not the April issue because invoices relating to that had not yet all been received and settled. The financial statements were always retrospective by one issue. In discussion, the Committee noted that the Bodyflight logo featured on the jump suits of the skydivers featured on the cover image. In response to a question, Lesley Gale said that the logo had not been airbrushed in at the Mag office - the composition of the image was as it had been received from the photographer.

13.2 June 2008 issue

The Editorial Report (circulated) had included the working document on the planned content of the June issue, which was noted by the Committee.

Lesley Gale called attention to a possible article on ground launching. Tony Butler said this came under the aegis of the British Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association. The BPA offered no instruction and training in it because it was outwith the BPA Operations Manual. Craig Poxon said he knew several good skydiving canopy pilots who were involved in ground launching, and Lesley Gale said the article may provide an educational service, and could be flagged with appropriate disclaimers. The Chairman said that there was no pressure to reach a decision today, and asked Lesley Gale kindly to circulate the article to the Committee outside the meeting so that it could be fully considered.

Action: Lesley Gale

14/08 Communications Action Plan: 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008

14.1 Online-Membership Survey Questionnaire

The Chairman reported that 372 members had responded to the BPA's first online membership survey questionnaire, which had been accessed by a link from the front page of the BPA website during March 2008. The results were now available and had been circulated to the Committee electronically. The responses to two-option and multi-choice questions had been displayed very effectively in graphical form, and the open responses (free comments) listed. The Chairman said he was pleased that no Member had requested a hard copy of the survey questions – which had been available for the asking – and reflected that the hours of drudgery in recording and analysing responses in previous paper-based surveys had been completely eliminated. The survey had cost the BPA only £76.35 as a not-for-profit organisation. The Committee congratulated the Chairman on having secured use of a survey program of such excellent quality and value for the BPA.

The Committee discussed how the survey had been promoted. John Horne said that, by his straw poll, some 8 out of 10 Members had never heard of it. The Chairman said it had been promoted in the Magazine, on the BPA website and by UKS. Lesley Gale said she had publicised by a special half-page advertisement in the Magazine in addition to a news item on the BPA Matters page. The Chairman said that as we conducted more surveys in the future, the more Members would be likely to take part. Martin Soulsby said that an e-mail reminder to Members might be appropriate next time, although he realised that the BPA Office did not presently have the facility to e-mail all members (this was planned as a new facility to be available with the new BPA website and database, see minute 15.1).

The Chairman said that all BPA Committees should now study the results of the questionnaire in relation to their own areas of activity.

Action: All Committees

Many of the free responses had mentioned Members' dissatisfaction with the current BPA website and called for this to be updated with a new look and new online services such as an online membership renewal facility. The good news was that this work was in hand.

The Chairman said that Members' comments in the free responses tended to fall into three categories (i) saying well done; (ii) constructive criticism of various aspects of the BPA; (iii) specific criticism of question 4 of the survey for failing to provide an option for Members who trained on round parachutes rather than on RAPS or AFF.

John Page believed that the responses in the free comments sections were possibly more useful than the multi-choice questions because they gave a clear insight into the views and concerns of Members. He said that some of the respondents had asked questions that he would have liked the Council and its Committees to answer, but there was no facility to respond to a comment on an individual basis. Perhaps this was something that could be offered as an option to Members who responded to the next survey? The Office took heart from the fact that perhaps the most widespread complaint by the Membership was about the BPA website, which was now perhaps the largest single new project on which the Communications and Development Committees were currently working. This demonstrated that the Council and its Committees were in touch with the wider Membership and listening.

The Committee agreed that the survey results should be published on the BPA website including the free responses, and in the Mag excluding the free responses because of the large amount of space they took up. Thanks to the respondents, the results could be published in unexpurgated form as this time there had been no defamatory or facetious comments submitted, not even the usual suggestion to hold the AGM in the Bahamas!

Target achieved

14.2 Study the feasibility of enhancing the BPA website

This had already been achieved – see minute 6.2.

Target achieved

14.3 BPA skydiving calendar 2008

This had already been achieved – see minute 6.3.

Target achieved

14.4 Trial promotional DVD on skydiving

Unfortunately, despite hard work by Paul Ledden, for which the Chairman thanked him in his absence, it had not proved possible to achieve this target – see minute 6.4.

Target not achieved

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

David Ibbotson said that one immediate use of the results of the online membership survey (minute 15.1) was that it showed that Members had little interest in purchasing skydiving photographs online. He was not therefore inclined to suggest that the introduction of such a facility should now be pursued for the Magazine website, particularly in view of the photographic archive project he knew Martin Soulsby would be proposing (minute 15.4).

The Chairman said that a meeting of the Communications Committee as a working group had been held from 1030-1245 this morning to consider the front-end of the new BPA website and the relationship of an updated Mag website or online Mag pages to the new BPA website. A quotation from a web development contractor for a new BPA website was to be recommended to the meeting of the full Council tonight (Council minute 32.2 refers). Although this quotation did not include the Mag's online presence, discussions had taken place with the preferred contractor, who had attended this morning's meeting, about this. The contractor was currently preparing a quotation, which he had initially estimated might be in the region of £1500 or less. These discussions would, in effect, complete the feasibility study of upgrading the Magazine website. The meeting this morning had included consideration of the 'page turner' facility used by some other websites to display the content of magazines.

Ongoing

15/08 Communications Action Plan: 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009

The Committee finalised its plan as follows to recommend to tonight's meeting of the full Council. The draft Action Plan matrix is set out as an appendix to these minutes. In the final version, each target in the matrix would be accompanied by an explanatory narrative.

15.1 Publish a new BPA website

This would be planned in four stages (i) web pages (ii) database; (iii) online voting; (iv) online renewals. The decision to amalgamate the BPA and Mag websites at the last meeting (minute 7.1) would be reviewed in the light of any difference in cost (minute 14.5). The budget would be decided by the full Council as it also involved the Development Committee in upgrading the back-end functionality of the new website. It might exceptionally require Council to vote additional funds in addition to the normal Action Plan budget,

Target agreed

After discussion, the Committee agreed to establish a small working group comprising the Chairman, Craig Poxon and BPA staff to compose the wording to be used on the new BPA website. Lesley Gale kindly offered to review the draft wording produced by the working group. Much of the text already existed in one form or another: it was a case of collating and refreshing it where possible. The use of images would also be important, calling to mind the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words. The Chairman suggested that the working group should meet at 1030 on the day of the next meeting, Tuesday 17 June.

Action: Working group

15.2. Prepare to publish a new Mag website or web pages

The consensus of the Committee was that the Mag's web presence - whether as webpages on the BPA website or by update to the content of its own URL www.skydivemag.com - would retain the Mag's own distinctive identity, which would be reflected in the look and 'feel' of its web presence. The budget would be agreed after consultation with the full Council as this target had synergy and overlap with the new BPA website project (minute 15.1), on which it would effectively be piggy-backed, thereby reducing costs to be as low as practicable. The provisional budget was set at £1.5K.

Target agreed

15.3 BPA Skydiving Calendar 2009

Budget £2K from running costs.

Target agreed

15.4 Explore the feasibility of creating an historical image archive of British parachuting

Martin Soulsby had circulated a paper with the agenda on his idea of developing an historical image archive of sport parachuting in the UK. He said that the idea had been triggered by the kind officer of former BPA magazine Editor David Waterman to make available his bank of some 500-700 images from the 1960s to the 1980s for digital capture by the BPA. Martin Soulsby said that he had continued to liaise with David Waterman about this, and that he now saw it as part of a wider project. He has also been in touch with other well-known skydiving photographers such as Leo Dickinson and Simon Ward who held substantial collections of images and had expressed broad support for the project.

The idea would be to build an online image bank to record the history of sport parachuting in the UK from its origins in the 1940s to the present day. The archive, once established, would be operated on a rolling basis to include today's images that would become the archive of tomorrow. Martin Soulsby had researched the cost and arrangements for the digitization of images and his conclusion was that this would best be done not as a student project, but by a professional agency to assure consistency and quality. The images would be labelled with meta-data, which would yield a searchable database. Additional information, as available, could also be recorded with each image. The more information associated with each image, the more useful the archive would be. Criteria for the selection of images for admission to the archive would also need to be developed. In response to a question, Martin Soulsby said he envisaged the archive, at least to start with, to include only still images as the inclusion of moving images could cause the bandwidth to spiral out of control.

Martin Soulsby had also prepared an outline budget and, on this basis, was exploring the possibility of applying for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund because the archive would be a unique record of the history of our sport. He had liaised with the Office in formulating a draft outline of the project to send to the Heritage Lottery Fund for advice on whether it might be appropriate to develop the proposal into a formal application for funding. At this stage, before any detailed guidance from the Heritage Lottery Fund had been sought, Martin Soulsby considered that the application might be for funding of £10K.

The draft outline application was predicated on the observation that some of the pioneers of sport parachuting in the UK were now no longer with us and others were now of great age. Many had kept treasured images of the sport from the past and it would be a missed opportunity not to seek to archive these images in a way that could inform, educate, entertain and inspire future generations in our sport as well as the public at large. The images would also provide a valuable archive of National Champions over the years as well as aircraft, equipment and locations. An image archive also offered a basis for the possible subsequent production of archive material in other forms, such as written history of the sport and the historical display in

the BPA Board Room that previous Councils had contemplated some years ago, but that had never come to pass because appropriate source material had never been consolidated into an accessible central source.

Martin Soulsby reported that he had also considered means for the archive, once established, to become self-supporting. It would be available free of charge for Members to use, and for personal use by the public for information and educational purposes. The archive also offered the opportunity of making images available for a fee to business and commerce for commercial applications. To this end, he had been in touch with a couple of photographic libraries and they had expressed an interest as no similar archive was known to exist in the UK. Any commercial exploitation of the archive would be likely to yield income say on a 50/50 basis between a photographic library and the BPA, the BPA share in turn being split say 50/50 between the BPA and the photographer, such that the BPA might receive a 25% share of the income. These figures were of course purely an estimate at this early stage. An advantage of such an arrangement was that the archive would generate little additional work for the BPA.

The Committee thanked Martin Soulsby for taking on this exciting project and for his attention to detail in planning it. The Committee agreed that a feasibility study should be included in the Action Plan, to include, if appropriate, making an application for external funding. The Committee set the budget for the feasibility study as £250.

Target agreed

15.5 Investigate the possibility of introducing a new, more durable type of membership card

Some comments in the online membership survey (minute 14.1) had suggested that the existing BPA Membership card would benefit from improvement. To this end, the Chairman offered to investigate the possibility of using a more durable plastic card. The Committee believed this to be a good idea. John Page said that any new cards should not be too expensive, because a Member's card was re-issued on the acquisition of any new ratings during the membership year, for example on successful completion of an instructor course. The Committee set the budget of £250 for the investigation.

15.6 Wireless Internet connection in the Board Room

The Office reported that the target discussed at the last meeting of a wireless Internet connection for the BPA Board Room and Office (minute 7.3) was being progressed through the Administration Action Plan (Council minute 33.2 refers).

16/08 Unauthorised use of the BPA logo on an external website

The Office called the attention of the Committee to the unauthorised use of the BPA logo on a commercial website. The Office had been in touch with the company concerned and sent them a copy of the BPA policy on the use of its logo, from which it was clear that the logo should not be used. The Chairman thanked the Office for calling this matter to the Committee's attention and trusted that the company would remove the logo. [Note: Shortly after the meeting, the company removed the BPA logo from its website.]

17/08 New book on skydiving

Lesley Gale called attention to a new book she had written entitled 'Extreme Sports: Skydiving', as her contribution to a series that aimed to encourage and inspire young readers through the excitement of the challenges and thrills of extreme sports. It was published by educational publishers Ticktock Media Ltd and available from Amazon, ISBN-10: 1846965268, ISBN-13: 978-1846965265.

18/08 Dates of next meetings

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

The meeting closed at 1535.

Appendix: Draft Action Plan matrix, 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009

Communications

| Target | From | To | By | How | Budget |
|---|-----------------|--|-----------|--|--|
| 1. Publish a new BPA website | Old BPA website | New BPA website,, in stages (i) web pages (ii) database; (iii) online voting; (iv) online renewals | June 2009 | To develop the public / member interface using a web development company with a database-driven solution | £tba (shared with Development and may need exceptional funding from the Council) |
| 2. Prepare to publish a new Mag website or web pages | Old Mag website | New website or new Mag pages on BPA website | June 2009 | To refresh and renew web pages about Skydive Mag, extending the technological developments of the new database and BPA website to the Mag website | £1.5K |
| 3. Publish a BPA Skydiving calendar 2009 | 2008 calendar | 2009 calendar | Dec 2008 | Design calendar, sell advertising space, publish | £2000 (from BPA running costs) |
| 4. Explore the feasibility of creating an historical image archive of British parachuting | No archive | Research feasibility of an online digital archive | June 2009 | Discuss and investigate with skydiving photographers past and present, photographic libraries, digitizing services, etc. Explore the possibility of obtaining a Heritage Lottery Grant | £250 |
| 5. Investigate a new, more durable type of membership card | Paper card | Possibly a plastic card? | Feb 2009 | Research requirements and propose pricing | £250 |