

The Royal Engineers Association

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Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



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See Distribution

27 January 2021

MINUTES OF THE 134th MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION, HELD ON ZOOM, ON THURSDAY 14th JANUARY 2021

PRESENT

Mr Kenneth Kirk	REA Controller – Chairman
Col M Quare MBE	Corps Colonel
Lt Col M Heffer RE TD	Reserve Officer
Maj I Higginbotham	Serving Officer
WO1 (RSM) M Martin	170 (Infra Sp) Engineer Group
WO1 (RSM) P Westoby	3 RSME Regt
Mr R Bardsley	South East Group
Mr R Tootle	NI & Scotland Group
Mr S Lipscombe	North Midlands Group
Lt Col P Taylor	Airborne Engineers Branch
Mr J Allerhead	London Group
Mr M Forder	North Eastern Group
Mr K Street	South Midlands Group
WO2 S Willson	North West Group

IN ATTENDANCE

Maj (Retd) I Sidebottom	Corps Treasurer
Maj (Retd) IL George	Assistant Controller and Secretary
Mr E Hargreaves	Trustee

APOLOGIES

WO1 (RSM) B Tulett	1 RSME Regt
Mr T Webb	South Wales Group
Mr D Ormsby	East Anglia Group
Mr D Pinder	Central Southern Group
Mr K Gover	South West Central Group

1. The Controller opened the meeting and welcomed those present, He extended seasons greetings to all assembled. The Controller welcomed the new committee members WO1 (RSM) Mark Martin and WO2 Scott Willson. The Controller explained the role of the Management Committee and that the committee make recommendations, which will be passed to the Board of Trustees.

2. The Controller noted that apologies had been received from those listed above.

ITEM 1 - TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE 133rd MEETING

3. The Committee accepted that the minutes of the 133rd meeting were a true record of the proceedings. The Chairman signed the minutes.

Proposed: Mr R Tootle – NI & Scotland Group

Seconded: Mr R Bardsley – South East Group

Carried

ITEM 2 - MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 133rd MEETING

4. Item 11: The Asst Controller discussed that he had made contact with the Group Secretaries reference re-election of elected members for a further 3 years. From the list below, he only had a reply from the NI & Scotland Group confirming the re-election of Mr R Tootle.

- Mr J Allerhead London Group
- Mr D Ormsby East Anglia Group
- Mr R Tootle NI & Scotland Group
- Mr P Taylor Airborne Engineers

ITEM 3 – TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE

5. The Asst Controller presented the Benevolence Report for the 12-month period ending December 2020.

6. The Asst Controller gave an update on benevolence and discussed the following areas:

- The amount spent on benevolence cases for the period 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2020 was £259,841.37. This is £34,504.99 less than the same period in 2019. The budget for 2021 will stay at £300,000.
- The Benevolence team has been working from home during the pandemic and that it was still functioning well with not much difference. There were more declines due to cases not meeting the criteria and caseworkers not being able to visit clients. Supporting cases worldwide serving soldiers and their families.
- The Asst Controller discussed the new Benevolence Handbook and how successful this document has been. He explained that once a few amendments have been made it would be produced as a hard copy and distributed to all branches and units.
- Mr Kevin Street asked that in these difficult times with hardship and challenges for veterans and their families how the message is getting out. The Controller agreed it is hard to contact serving soldiers and service leavers but with work on the REA social media channels reaching out will improve.

7. The report is at Annex A.

ITEM 4 - TO NOTE THE CORPS COLONEL'S REPORT ON THE CORPS

8. The Corps Colonel gave his report on the Corps and highlighted the following areas:

- The manning situation for the Corps is good with retention and inflow very buoyant.
- Operation Commitment still focusing on the pandemic with overseas deployments still going on in the background.
- Integrated review, which will show the future shape of the Corps.

- The Corps Colonel discussed the Chief Royals Commendations, which come out twice a year at the same time as the Queens Honours lists. He will send the calling note to the Controller for 2021.

9. The report is at Annex B.

ITEM 5 – RECRUITING COMMITTEE

10. The Controller discussed the Recruiting minutes which had been sent to all committee members and he wanted to highlight the following points:

- One of the Trustees Claire James, the CO of 3 RSME Regt now chairs the Recruiting Committee.
- The introduction of the Branch Information cards.
- Developing awareness of the REA to the serving Corps.
- The controller asked for the minutes to be distributed to all REA members and asked for feedback on how reaching out can be improved

ITEM 6 – THE BADGE OF MERIT AWARDS 2021

11. The Controller explained that nominations are received at HQ REA and were considered by an Awards Board in December 2020. Of the five nominations, all five were selected and worthy to receive the award.

12. The Committee took great pleasure in awarding the prestigious REA Badge of Merit to the following members:

Ser	Nomination	Branch	Group
1	Robert McCann	Southampton and District	South West Southern Group
2	John McConnell	Lanarkshire Branch	NI & Scotland Group
3	William Whittaker	Brighton Branch	Southern Group
4	Roy Morgan	Birkenhead Branch	North West Group
5	Robert Wood	Gloucester & District Branch	South Midlands Group

13. Their commitment to the Association and their comrades was remarkable and worthy of recognition through the award. The Controller will notify award winners officially.

14. The Controller also discussed that when we are back to normal there will be an event where the BOM awards for 2020 & 2021 will be presented.

The Committee agreed to the REA Badge of Merit nominations.

Proposed: Mr J Allerhead – London Group

Seconded: Mr S Lipscombe – North Midlands Group

Carried

ITEM 7 - CORPS MEMORIAL EVENTS

15. The Controller and the committee had a lengthy discussion on Corps events and as there is no certainty when the pandemic would end, the Controller spoke on the way forward:

- Due to COVID 19 there were no Corps events in 2020 and so far this year the Chilwell and Minley weekends have been cancelled. The REA is waiting for a decision from the Gibraltar Branch to see if that is still going ahead in May.
- For the other events in 2021 then the REA will be flexible as lockdowns and travel restrictions change. It is hopeful that the Chatham Weekend on the 17-19 September 2021 will go ahead and also the AGM and Annual Dinner in October. The AGM will still be on line as this has members attending who do not normally attend the London event. All these events will be discussed at the next Trustees Board meeting and the President will make a decision on the way forward.
- There will also be plans for events later on in the year and the RSM from Chilwell has volunteered to plan an event if the situation allows.

16. The Controller also discussed the Salty Sappers Atlantic Rowing Challenge, which will take place in December 2021. The REA has supported this with £48,000. This is a big event for the REA to get behind and help fundraise. The Corps Colonel asked everyone to support this event and promote as much as possible. The event will be in the Sapper Magazine from the February edition and throughout the year. Mr Steve Lipscombe will speak to Mr Mo Howe from World of Sappers to see what assistance can be given to the Salty Sappers.

ITEM 8- BRANCH FINANCIAL SUMMARY-UPDATE

17. The Corps Treasurer discussed the investment portfolio for the General Fund and explained how the investments were doing well because at this time the stock market is very strong. However in April 2020 12% of the fund had been wiped out but now in January 2021 it has recovered well and the worth of the charity is nearly £12.9 million. £250,000 needs to be released from the fund soon and this should be at some point before investments drop. The Controller explained even though we have this much money we cannot be complacent; it is not a pot of money we can spend as then we will not get enough income back for the year. The REA must forward plan for pinch points and expenditure keeping a close eye on the cash flow. We must make sure the investment works for us as it is a growth and income fund.

18. The Controller is pleased with the amount of financial summaries that are coming in from the Groups and branches. He is particularly impressed with the amount of branches that have taken up the on-line option as this makes his life easier and the information can be put straight on to the spreadsheet. Half of the financial summaries so far have been sent in on-line and the Controller believes this is the way forward and wants all branches to complete the financial summaries on-line next year. Two signatures are not required on the form this year due to the difficulty in getting them signed. It is also the aim that all other REA forms will be completed on-line. The Controller has also taken calls from branches and discussed the form if they have had any problems when being completed.

ITEM 9 – TO NOTE THE ALLOCATION OF GRANTS TO ANNUAL EVENTS

19. Grant requests were received for the following events in 2021:

Event (a)	Requested Amount (b)	Amount Supported by HQ REA (c)
CM & Vets Weekend - Chatham	£8,500 (£8,500 in 2018)	£8,500
Minley Weekend	£7,500 (£7,500 in 2018)	£8,500
Chilwell Weekend	£8,500 (£8,500 in 2018)	£8,500
Gibraltar Weekend	£3,000 (£3,000.00 in 2018)	£8,500

20. The Controller decided that the grants for the Corps annual events in 2021 will remain the same as last year and if the event does not happen, the grants will be passed over to 2022.

21. Kevin Street asked that we can be flexible later on in the year and if events are organised will funds be made available. The Controller confirmed they would. The Committee recommends to REA Finance Committee and Board of Trustees at their next meetings.

22. The Controller explained that the Corps event in 2022 at Rochester Cathedral would be supported by the REA. This event is to thank the Cathedral for their support to the Corps and raise funds for the Cathedral.

ITEM 10 - THE UNIT AND SUPPORT FUND – WELFARE GRANT

23. The Controller discussed the following points about the welfare grant.

- This year's grant is £100,000 and the information on how units and branches can bid is on the REA website.
- There is flexibility when applying for a grant but act quickly. If the application is made in this quarter then it will be paid in March/April.
- Kevin Street said the process last year worked well when he applied and went smoothly.

ITEM 11 – REA STRATEGY

24. The Controller explained the REA strategy and covered the following:

- The main aim is to improve the digital presence and upgrade the social media platforms we have and move forward.
- Move everything we can do on line and be more effective.
- Zoom has been successful for meetings and is not a replacement for meetings but can be useful for those who are isolated.
- Reach out to the serving community and service leavers. Recruitment is important.
- The Controller discussed the idea of an app and the way forward.
- The Controller explained about laptops being made available by the MOD and that he has bid for 120 for Groups and branches.
- The Controller told everyone about the new E-Sports Branch which is being formed.

ITEM 10 - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

25. The Controller asked for any other business from the committee:
- Mr Steve Lipscombe appealed for all Branches to support Mr Mo Howe at World of Sappers in Worksop who is supplying food and comfort parcels to serving soldiers at home and abroad. Contact Steve Lipscombe if any more information is required
 - Mr Rick Tootle discussed the National Standard Bearers Competition in September and the National Standard Bearer carry on for another year. The Controller said this matter can wait and be discussed at the next meeting in July when things may be clearer.
 - The Corps Colonel asked if there had been an update on the Corps Plot at the NMA. The Controller explained that Mr K Bazeley had been to the plot at Remembrance and all looked good. The Corps Treasurer told the committee that in the funding agreement for the NMA it states that the flag to be replaced annually but only when asked to do so by the NMA.
 - Martin Heffer said that all involved in looking at the app and improving outreach should be commended and well done.

ITEM 11. – FINAL POINTS FROM THE CONTROLLER.

26. The Controller thanked everyone for attending the meeting and said that points from the meeting especially Corps events will be discussed at the next Trustees Board meeting on Friday 22 January 2021 and if there are, any important decisions made at the meeting he will report straight back to the committee.

ITEM 12. - DATE OF NEXT MEETING

27. The date and location of the next meeting is scheduled for 1000hrs 15 July 2021 on Zoom.

04 February 2021

Assistant Controller

Minutes Approved

Dated

Chairman

Distribution:

Management Committee Members
Council Members
Group Directors
Deputy Group Directors
Group Secretaries
Branch Secretaries
Controller REA
Corps Treasurer

Benevolence Report to the REA Management Committee January 2021

1. **Trends 2020.** For the period 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2020 the number of benevolence cases submitted to the Association by SSAFA, The Royal British Legion and other organisations was 508, this is 81 cases less than for 2019 (589 cases). Of these 508 cases, 235 were submitted by SSAFA and 145 by TRBL; these figures are comparable to the same period in 2019.

2. **Individual Benevolence Cases Considered during 2020 – 2017 (Excludes Weekly Allowances and Christmas Grants)**

Category	2020	2019	2018	2017
Disabled & Illness	145	116	166	163
Aged	13	22	41	32
Widows	38	45	63	51
Unemployed	119	76	128	119
Miscellaneous	106	210	124	129
Grants not made	87	120	31	51
Totals	508	589	553	545

Regular – Reserve Case Comparisons	2020	2019	2018	2017
Regular Cases	401	433	464	450
Reservist Cases	20	36	58	44
Regular Grants	£244577	£272596.98	£261987	£255,169
Reservist Grants	£15264.37	£21749.02	£26423	£16,614

3. **Cost of Benevolence Cases Jan to Dec 2020.** The unaudited amount spent on benevolence cases for the period 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2020 was £259,841. This is £34,504.99 less than the same period in 2019. There was a drop in reservist grants with a decrease of 29% over the previous year with the number of reservist cases reducing by 39% over the previous year.

It has been agreed to maintain the Benevolence budget at £300,000 for 2021.

4. **Benevolence Committee meetings**

The Benevolence Committee met on four occasions in the past year; during these meetings a number of observers are invited from Units across the Corps - this gives the opportunity for serving soldiers of all ranks to see the work of the REA and to contribute to the discussion regarding benevolence grants. There continues to be no limit to the level of an individual grant, these are assessed on the basis of the individual need. Provided the information supplied by the caseworker is complete then decisions on grants can be made quickly and processed within a week. The out of committee procedures are now well established and grant requests that exceed the Controllers authorised limit of £1000 can be quickly circulated to the members of the Benevolence Committee and decisions made.

5. **Grants to Charities.** The grant to ABF still stands at £50k and the grant to SSAFA stands at £20k.

RHQ RE/Update/REA/03/19

06 Jan 21

REA Management/Council Committee

RHQ RE UPDATE - as at 06 Jan 21

1. **Headlines.** The Main Effort remains stabilising the RE Workforce with efforts shifting from *size* to *shape*. The Corps continues to attract the right "people" for the future. The endorsed RE Workforce Plan is working and will be refreshed in Apr 21 to take into account the outputs from the Integrated Review (IR). Clearly COVID support has featured significantly over the last 9-months and will endure for the foreseeable future; a fluid situation remains in place. Concurrently, the RSME Group has and continues to train our soldiers through Initial Trade Training (ME Cbt Engr) and Subsequent Trade Training (ME @ Trade).

2. **Workforce Position - 01 Dec 20.**

Workforce Position	Workforce Requirement	Workforce Strength	Difference	%
OF	1155	1150	-5	99.6%
OR	6162	6117	-45	99.3%
Total	7317	7267	-50	99.3%

Overall strength is incredibly healthy at 99.3% against the Army Manpower Planning Liability (AMPL). This is a huge improvement over the 12-months since Dec 19, growing from an OR strength of 5629 to 6117; an increase of 488 people. Voluntary Outflow, or Notice to Terminate, rates have reduced from 7.9% in Dec 19 to 5.4% in Dec 20, contributing to the success in growing our strength. There is work required to get the workforce into the right *shape*, as we have an excess of Sappers and too few JNCOs. This will be done in coming years by adjusting promotion quotas to help the flow of talent through the Corps and fill the JNCO 'black hole'.

3. **Operations/Commitments.** 2908 Force Elements (FE)'s are committed across 15 countries conducting 9 UK Ops and 11 Overseas Ops (225 SP deployed overseas), in a total of 64 commitments. Key areas of interest (numbers of deployed) are: Estonia, Mali, Afghanistan and the broader Middle East. Collective training continues to be resourced and planned with Squadrons due to deploy to: Belize, Cyprus and Kenya.

4. **Corps Events - Projects of note (COVID pending!!);**

• **Books:**

- Follow The Sapper Edition 2. Published.
- Operation TRENTON (in pictures). Published.
- A Short History of the Corps (refresh). Apr 21.
- Portraits, Pictures and Silver of the Corps. Sep 21.

- 14 - 16 Jun 21 - Sapper Games @ 23 Engr Regt.
- 19 Sep 21 - Corps Memorial Day @ Chatham.
- 25 Nov 21 - RE Awards Dinner @ ICE London.

5. **Reward/Recognition.** The Corps continues to feature on State, 4*, 3* and 2* commendation lists; in 2020 c153 personnel we recognised for their work/commitment. Can I

remind the board of the Chief Royal Engineers 3* commendation; the award aligns to the QBL and NYHL. The award is open to the entire "*Sapper Family*". Please do use it, some internal REA guidelines may be required.

6. **RE Museum.** Although closed for much of the last 9-months, I am pleased to report work (c£1.5M) has commenced on the new archive, study centre and exhibition space. Formal opening is planned for late Jul 21.

7. **Sapper Shop.** The shop continues to do very well under the new management team with very buoyant on-line sales. I encourage a visit at www.sappershop.com



8. **Thank You.** Of note and importance; can I offer a sincere thank you to the REA for their excellent support to the serving Corps during 2020. It has been exceptional be it welfare grants, stable belts, sports grants, polo shirts and much need benevolence on a case by case basis. Fingers crossed Spring/Summer 2021 will see us meet face (2~metre) face at meetings and wider Corps – REA events.

Corps Col RE