

The Royal Engineers Association

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Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



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See Distribution

27 January 2022

MINUTES OF THE 136th MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION, HELD ON ZOOM ON THURSDAY 13th JANUARY 2022

PRESENT

Mr Kenneth Kirk	CEO REA – Chairman
Lt Col M Heffer RE TD	Reserve Officer
WO1 (CSM) M Elliott MBE	Corps Sergeant Major
WO1 (RSM) S Eardley	1 RSME Regt
WO1 (RSM) M Martin	170 (Infra Sp) Engineer Group
WO1 (RSM) P Westoby	3 RSME Regt
Capt D Bell	South Wales Group
Mr M Payne BEM	Central Southern Group
Mr R Bardsley	South East Group
Mr R Tootle	NI & Scotland Group
Mr P Luscombe	North Midlands Group
Lt Col P Taylor	Airborne Engineers Branch
Mr J Allerhead BEM	London Group
Mr M Forder	North Eastern Group
Mr K Street	South Midlands Group
Mr S Wilson	North West Group
Mr D Ormsby	East Anglia Group

IN ATTENDANCE

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

APOLOGIES

Col M Quare MBE	Corps Colonel
Maj I Higginbotham	Serving Officer

1. The CEO opened the meeting and welcomed those present, He extended season's greetings to all assembled.

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

ITEM 1 - TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE 135th MEETING

3. The Committee accepted that the minutes of the 135th meeting were a true record of the proceedings. The CEO signed the minutes.

Proposed: WO1 (RSM) P Westoby – 3 RSME Regt

Seconded: Mr R Bardsley – South East Group

Carried

ITEM 2 - MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 135th MEETING

4. Item 5: The CEO confirmed that information for Group Directors, Deputy Group Directors and Group Secretaries have been added to the Rules of the REA.

5. Item 10: The CEO explained the changes to how the Annual Financial Summaries (AFS) can be submitted electronically and how well the Zoom meeting to Treasurers on how to complete the AFS went in November.

ITEM 3 – TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE

6. The Operations Manager presented the Benevolence report for the 12-month period ending 31 December 2021.

7. The Operations Manager gave an update on benevolence and discussed the following areas:

- The amount spent on benevolence cases for the period 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2021 was £228,573.90. This is £31,267.47 less than the same period in 2020. The budget for 2022 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. We continue to support cases worldwide and for serving soldiers and their families.
- The Operations Manager discussed the updated Benevolence Handbook that has been produced as a hard copy and has been distributed to all branches and units.
- Examples of benevolence that has been given to serving soldiers and veterans over the last 12 months were presented.

8. Mr Kevin Street asked a question about funding funerals for veterans. It was explained that support is given for funerals by the REA and other military charities but the procedure of using a SSAFA or TRBL caseworker must be followed.

9. The CEO thanked the Benevolence team for the work they do especially with the complex cases that are now being presented and will continue in the future.

10. The CEO also explained how the Kitchener Fund can assist children of families that have been affected by an illness or death of a parent and it is difficult for the remaining parent to support the child or children. There are currently eleven families being supported by the Kitchener Fund and two of those families are serving soldiers.

11. The report is at Annex A.

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

12. The Corps SM gave the Corp Colonel's report on the Corps and highlighted the following areas:

- The Corps remains in good health, operationally focused and still projecting a global reach.
- The Corps remains well manned and Inflow continue to be very healthy (both Offrs and Sldrs) and the RSME continues to deliver high quality Cbt Engr and trade training.
- A huge thank you to the REA for the funding support they give for welfare, sport, esprit de corps and Adventure Training.
- An update was given on the Salty Sappers progress so far.

13. The report is at Annex B.

ITEM 5 – RECRUITING COMMITTEE

14. The CEO discussed the Recruiting minutes which had been sent to all committee members and he just wanted to highlight the changes that will be happening to the REA social media platforms over the next few months.

ITEM 6 – THE BADGE OF MERIT AWARDS 2022

15. The CEO explained that nominations are received at HQ REA and were considered by an Awards Board in December 2021. Of the twenty nominations, eleven were selected and worthy to receive the award. The CEO also mentioned that the standard was very high.

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

Ser	Nomination	Branch	Group
1	Mr Chris Beaumont	Thanet and District	South East
2	Mr Bob Beer	Cyprus	HQ & Overseas
3	Mr Ray Ellis	Junior Leaders	South East
4	Mr John Ettles	HQ REA	HQ & Overseas
5	Mr Jason Farnell	Medway	South East
6	Mr Eric Hargreaves	Potteries	North West
7	Mr Brian Henderson	Monmouth	South Wales
8	Mr Allister Honeyman	Lanarkshire	NI & Scotland
9	Mr Ron Macgregor MBE	Dundee	NI & Scotland
10	Mr John Stanley	Cannock	South Midlands
11	Mr Kevin Street	Long Marston	South Midlands

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

The Committee agreed to the REA Badge of Merit nominations.

Proposed: Mr R Tootle – NI & Scotland Group

Seconded: Mr M Forder– Eastern Group

Carried

ITEM 7 – FINANCIAL UPDATE

18. The Corps Treasurer briefed the members on the value of the REA and he explained the balance sheet and investment sheet. He also discussed the cash reserves, investments and dividends which included the portfolio for the last 6 months. The Corps Treasurer then explained that having the reserves is a major source of income and that we are in a very fortunate position. He also said that generous legacies and donations was also very welcome and very important in sustaining the income. The Corps Treasurer discussed the purchase of a property at Ebbsfleet that the REA have bought for a long term investment which will produce a steady income. The contracts were exchanged on the 16 December 2021 and completion will be in February 2022.

19. Lt Col Martin Heffer praised the positive work that is being done on the investments.

ITEM 8- BRANCH ANNUAL FINANCIAL SUMMARY-UPDATE

20. The CEO is pleased with the amount of financial summaries that are coming in from the Groups and branches so far which is about 40% already received. The CEO discussed the Zoom training that was given to Treasurers and he does not mind Treasurers getting in touch for advice on how to complete the AFS. The CEO has made changes to the online form and is pleased that branches are using it as this will be the way forward with the changes to the website and the new app.

21. Mike Payne BEM asked if the Groups can be told who has submitted the AFS so they can chase the other branches. The Chairman will send out lists to the groups so this can happen.

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

22. Grant requests were received for the following events in 2022:

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	£12,000 (£3,000.00 in 2018)	£12,000
REA AGM and Dinner		£10,000
Rochester Cathedral Event		£6,000
Platinum Jubilee Events		£10,000

23. The CEO discussed the grants for the Corps annual events in 2022:

- The RSM's from 1 RSME Regt, 3 RSME Regt and 170 (Infra Sp) Engineer Group agreed that £8,500 for the Corps Weekends was fine.
- Richard Bardsley asked if the Platinum Jubilee funding will be flexible and Kevin Street asked a similar question on flexibility in funds as costs rise. The CEO confirmed that flexibility is available but a good justification and explanation is required.
- Peter Luscombe asked if the funds for the Gibraltar weekend will go back to £8,500 next year and the CEO said it will go back to the standard funding.

- The Corps SM Marc Elliot asked what the best way is for RSM's to gauge for funding for the Platinum Jubilee events and the CEO said this will be discussed and a form produced.

24. The Grants for 2022 were proposed to the Committee:

- **Proposed:** Mr J Allerhead BEM – London Group
- **Seconded:** Mr D Ormsby – East Anglia Group
- **Carried**

ITEM 10 - THE UNIT AND BRANCH SUPPORT FUND

25. The CEO discussed the following points about the 2022 Unit and Branch Support Fund.

- Last year's grant was over the £100,000 and the Finance Committee were flexible and not sticking to the set amount. There was some great projects which were wide ranging and included a holiday home, Soldier Space, Corporals Club, Branch accommodation, etc.
- This year's grant is £100,000 and the information on how units and branches can bid is on the REA website. This has not been sent to Regiments yet.
- 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. If additional funds from charities or agencies are available then this will help towards the grant and also a contribution from the Regiment or Branch is required.
- Kevin Street explained that he applied for a grant a couple of years ago and the form and process worked really well.
- Mike Payne BEM said that if Groups were not accepted for a grant then is should be explained to them why. The CEO explained that if they contacted him he would explain why the grant was not successful and what is required to get it through.

ITEM 11 – REA STRATEGY

26. The CEO explained the REA strategy and covered the following:

- Looking at the digital transformation of the Association to improve our outreach and connection as wide as possible to the Sapper family.
- The website development is underway by Bronco who we are already using. It will improve the digital offer with major changes that make the website easier to use and navigate around. The app development is ready to go and just needs the content and a content manager who has been interviewed and will start soon. The website is due to be ready on the 30 June 2022. This is a major step and we will have teething problems but the changes will answer the questions that the Groups and Branches have been asking over the last couple of years.
- Peter Luscombe asked if you had to go to the App store for the app and the CEO explained that the app is web based app which needs to be downloaded.
- The CEO discussed Leafyard which is a positive Mental Health app that gives access to therapies and helps anyone who may have mental health issues. Leafyard is being launched on the Blue Monday the 17 January 2022. It is being used by the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and is a clinically proven system. The REA has purchased 500 cards.

ITEM 12 – CORPS MEMORIAL WEEKENDS AND EVENTS FOR 2022

27. The Operations Manager discussed the following event for 2022 and gave an update:

2022 Diary. Events of interest for 2022 have been notified to HQ REA.

26 March	Army v RAF Rugby Kingsholm Gloucester
30 April	Army v Navy Rugby Twickenham
20-23 May	Gibraltar Weekend*
09 June	The Royal Hospital Chelsea Founders Day Parade
TBC	Chilwell Weekend*
TBC	Minley Weekend*
16 - 18 September	Corps Memorial Weekend*
8 October	REA AGM and Annual Dinner *
9 October	Sapper Sunday at Royal Hospital Chelsea
10 November	Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey
13 November	Remembrance Sunday

*National Events

- The RSM 170 (Infra Sp) Engineer Group thanked Kevin Street for the very successful Chilwell Winter Dinner. The RSM explained that there are turbulent times at 170 with the headquarters changing. June is not a good time with the Queens 70th Jubilee Anniversary and Armed Forces weekend. It was decided that the Chilwell Weekend will not happen this year but another Winter Dinner will go ahead at the end of November 2022.
- The RSM of 3 RSME Regt briefed that the main issue with having the Minley Weekend is the lack of accommodation. The RSM will see when the Jubilee event is planned as a day's activity which the Branches can be invited to. The CEO said the logical approach is that the Minley weekend will not go ahead but the RSM will discuss with the CO and get back to the committee.
- The RSM of 1 RSME Regiment briefed that the Chatham Weekend will be on the 16 – 18 September 2022 and the planning is going ahead. The format will be in the same vein as last year with the paperwork going out in a couple of months.
- The CEO briefed on the Salty Sappers and how well they are doing.
- The CEO asked that when units and branches have dates for the Platinum Jubilee events, can they be passed to HQ REA.

ITEM 13 - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

28. The CEO asked for any other business from the committee:

- Mr Kevin Street explained that his branch is struggling for numbers and this year they are going to introduce informal meetings to get more ex Sappers along. The forecast of events will be for the whole year and this will be backed by advertising. He is looking for templates/formats to support this. Mike Payne BEM said he can assist and the CEO will also speak to Bev at the Sapper Magazine for portfolio pictures and templates which can go on the website.
- Scott Wilson raised a point which had come from the Group AGM about branches being informed of funerals for ex Sappers in their area. The CEO discussed the support HQ REA can give to funerals and the point of contact is Julia Ferguson.
- The CEO discussed the Sapper watch that has been produced and that £25 from each watch sold is raised for the Association. This was not included on the advert in the Sapper Magazine and will be changed.
- Rick Tootle asked that all Groups pay attention to the Standard Bearers competition and if they need help with training or organising a competition then contact him. Rick Tootle to send info on Standard Bearers competition and CEO will send to Branches.

ITEM 14. – FINAL POINTS FROM THE CEO.

29. The CEO thanked everyone for attending the meeting and that the Management Committee is very important as it determines the way the Association works over the year. The CEO said the committee must keep in touch by using Boardable.

ITEM 15. - DATE OF NEXT MEETING

30. The date and location of the next meeting is scheduled for 1000hrs 21 July 2022 on Zoom.

Note: Since the meeting the CEO is keen for the next meeting to be on the 21 July 2022 in Catterick whilst the Sapper Games is being held.

02 February 2022

Operations Manager

Minutes Approved

Dated

Chairman

Distribution:

Management Committee Members
Board of Trustees
Group Directors
Deputy Group Directors
Group Secretaries
Branch Secretaries
CEO REA
Corps Treasurer

Benevolence Report to the REA Management Committee January 2022

1. **Trends 2021.** For the period 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2021 the number of benevolence cases submitted to the Association by SSAFA, The Royal British Legion and other organisations was 400, this is 108 cases less than for 2020 (508 cases). Of these 400 cases, 185 were submitted by SSAFA, 145 by TRBL and the rest by other sources; these figures are comparable to the same period in 2020.

2. Individual Benevolence Cases Considered during 2021 – 2018 (Excludes Weekly Allowances and Christmas Grants)

Category	2021	2020	2019	2018
Disabled & Illness	80	145	116	166
Aged	4	13	22	41
Widows	41	38	45	63
Unemployed	119	119	76	128
Miscellaneous	94	106	210	124
Grants not made	62	87	120	31
Totals	400	508	589	553

Regular – Reserve Case Comparisons	2021	2020	2019	2018
Regular Cases	329	401	433	464
Reservist Cases	09	20	36	58
Regular Grants	£225,653.90	£244,577	£272,596.98	£261,987
Reservist Grants	£2,920	£15,264.37	£21,749.02	£26,423

3. **Cost of Benevolence Cases Jan to Dec 2021.** The unaudited amount spent on benevolence cases for the period 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2021 was £228573.90. This is £31,267.47 less than the same period in 2020. There was a drop in reservist grants with a decrease of 80% over the previous year with the number of reservist cases reducing by 51% over the previous year.

It has been agreed to maintain the Benevolence budget at £300,000 for 2022.

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 £60k and the grant to SSAFA stands at £30k.

RHQ RE/Update/REA/03/19

06 Jan 22

RHQ RE NOTE – REA MAN CTTEE (JAN 22)

- **Headline.** The Corps remain in good health, operationally focused, good busy and still projecting a global reach. Most Regts were able to take a well-earned Christmas break (3 weeks in many instances). However, 26 Fd Sqn deployed to Poland prior to Christmas to support our NATO partner with border construction works and a few units supported Gov/NHS COVID Ops with limited SP over the festive period. Subunits are now planning to deploy on exercises to: Kenya (4 months CS and dwell); Belize (construction); Cyprus x 2 (construction). Regular close support exercises continue in UK.
- **Workforce (Manning – old money).** The Corps remains well manned, over manned in fact (c450). Inflow continue to be very healthy (both Offrs and Sldrs) and the RSME continues to deliver high quality Cbt Engr and trade training. Work is progressing at a pace to ensure all training has a civilian apprenticeship accreditation (L2 but ideally L3). Retention has remained very low, less than 4% but as expected the post-Christmas period has seen a slight rise in SP giving notice; it is too early to analysis the data and trade trends. The Army is starting to implement some workforce levers to control the over manning as the excess across the entire Army is creating a fiscal headache. Some measure, medical discharge for example, have not been used for many years despite policies being in place.
- **Future Soldier.** CGS has now delivered orders for the Future Soldier programme. Exact detail is still a work in progress but headlines that can be briefed are:
 - The Corps retains all of its Regts
 - One OF5 Group will go; 12 and 170 Gp will merge into a FS Group. HQ location remains tbc.
 - 8X is retained.
 - Future locations are set; to move are 36ER to Cottesmore (2029); 21RE to Catterick (2024/5); 28ER to Woodbridge (2024/25).
 - Regts will slim down and there will be a reduction of c3 sub-units over the time period now to 2025.
 - Exact numbers are still LIMDIS, but the Corps will remain c 9/10% of the new 73K Army.
- **Events. 2022 sees several large-scale events:**
 - **6 Feb 22.** HM Queen and our Col-in-Chief Platinum Jubilee. Detail on the latter: a book is to be commissioned as a present; lapel badge (Ian S can brief); street party funding; and a Col-in-Chief reception (DTG – tbc).
 - **May 22.** GIB 250 (REA).
 - **Jul 22.** Sapper Games in Catterick after a two-year absence.
 - **Sep 22.** CMD @ Chatham including a new AFG plaque in Rochester Cathedral (Corps SM can brief).
- **Welfare Funds.** A huge thank you for the REA support during 2021 to units et al. The funding is really making a difference, as do the Sports, Esprit de corps and AT grants. The Chatham pavilion is progressing well with a contractor now selected to deliver.

- **Branding/Comms.** Can I request all to support – amplify the Corps strong brand through our constant drum beat of all Sapper Family activity via SM platforms.
- **Salty Sappers.** At the time of writing they continue to make great progress, having set off on 12 Dec 21, they are due to finish on 22/23 Jan 22 (c41 days). A great effort – fingers crossed they hit the finish line as planned. I am sure Ken will provide more on the day.

Corps Col RE