

# The Royal Engineers Association

(Registered under the Charities Act 1992 and a charity registered in Scotland)

Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



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See Distribution

18 January 2023

## **MINUTES OF THE 138<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION, HELD AT THE RE MUSEUM AND ON ZOOM ON THURSDAY 12<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2023**

### **PRESENT**

Mr Kenneth Kirk	CEO REA – Chairman
Lt Col M Heffer RE TD	Reserve Officer
Maj P Marsh	Serving Officer
WO1 (CSM) M Elliott MBE	Corps Sergeant Major
WO1 (RSM) S Eardley	1 RSME Regt
Capt D Bell	South Wales Group
Mr A Brown	Southern Group
Mr M Payne BEM	Central Southern Group
Mr R Bardsley	South East Group
Mr R Tootle	NI & Scotland Group
Mr M Forder	North Eastern Group
Mr S Tolley	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

### **APOLOGIES**

Col R Hawkins MBE ADC	Corps Colonel
WO1 (RSM) P McBride	3 RSME Regt
Mr P Luscombe	North Midlands Group
Mr J Allerhead BEM	London Group

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 137<sup>th</sup> MEETING**

3. The Committee accepted that the minutes of the 137<sup>th</sup> meeting were a true record of the proceedings. The CEO signed the minutes.

**Proposed:** Mr S Wilson

**Seconded:** Mr M Payne BEM

**Carried**

### **ITEM 2 - MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 137<sup>th</sup> MEETING**

4. Item 18: In the July meeting the committee turned down a proposal to increase the MMA to members. Since the meeting the Civil Service have increased their MMA claim. The Board of Trustees has agreed that the REA should be in line with the Civil Service and has raised the MMA to £0.45p per mile, £0.05p for a passenger and £0.02p for a second passenger. All MMA claims to be completed on line.

### **ITEM 3 – TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE**

5. The Operations Manager presented the Benevolence report for the 12-month period ending 31 December 2022.

6. 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 2022 was £211,455. This is £17,118.90 less than the same period in 2021. The budget for 2022 will stay at £300,000. 453 cases were dealt with in the year. There was an increase in reservist grants with a rise of £237% over the previous year.
- The Benevolence team met on four occasions in the last year, during these meetings a number of observers are invited from Units across the Corps which 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.
- 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.
- Two examples of benevolence that has been given to serving soldiers and veterans over the last 12 months were presented.
- Reasons for cases being declined were also explained. Overseas clients were assisted in Malta, Cyprus, Malaysia, Thailand, Fiji, Majorca, Philippines and Spain. Some very nice thank you letters have also been received.

7. The CEO also explained the Gabriel Fund, Ballard Fund and 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 twelve families being supported by the Kitchener Fund and three of those families are serving soldiers.

8. The report is at Annex A.

9. Lt Col Heffer RE TD asked for confirmation of Reservist Benevolence figures for 2022. It was confirmed that 23 Reservists had been assisted in 2022.

10. Mr Mike Payne BEM asked for examples of Benevolence cases be available for when briefing recruits on the REA. This will be made available when asked for.

#### ITEM 4 - TO NOTE THE CORPS SM REPORT ON THE CORPS

11. 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 in Germany, Estonia, Cyprus, Middle East, Belize and Africa.
- The Corps also supported sectors on strike over Christmas with military aid. The REA supported these soldiers with welfare support.
- The Corps remains well manned and inflow continue to be very healthy (both officers and soldiers). Female soldiers are now at 2.7%.
- A huge thank you to the REA for the funding support they give for welfare, sport, esprit de corps and Adventure Training. Stable belts and hoodies for recruits were also discussed.
- The Corps SM informed that the Corps Boxing would be on the 9 March 2023 at Chatham. 1 RSME Regt is holding the Sapper Games on the 3 – 6 July at Chatham. The Corps SM asked for the REA to support these events.

12. The report is at Annex B.

#### ITEM 5 – RECRUITING COMMITTEE

13. The CEO discussed the Recruiting Committee minutes which had been sent to all committee members and he just wanted to highlight Mission Activate and the changes that will be happening to the REA social media platforms over the next few months. The CEO also mentioned the South West Group rededication of Standards at Truro Cathedral on the 19 March 2023 which is a recruiting event and he would like to see as many members as possible attending.

#### ITEM 6 – THE BADGE OF MERIT AWARDS 2023

14. The CEO explained that nominations are received at HQ REA and were considered by an Awards Board in December 2022. Of the four nominations, three were selected and worthy to receive the award.

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

Ser	Nomination	Branch	Group
1	Mr K Smith	Lowestoft & District	East Anglia Group
2	Mr R Andrews	Newton Abbott	South West Group
3	Mr J Hawley	North Wales	North West Group

16. 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 Bardsley

**Seconded:** Capt D Bell

**Carried**

#### ITEM 7 – FINANCIAL UPDATE

17. The Corps Treasurer briefed the members on the value of the REA and he explained the

balance sheet and investment sheet. He discussed the Investments were at £10,788,402 and cash at bank £117,969. The Corps Treasurer then explained that having the reserves is a major source of income and that we are in a very fortunate position. The Corps Treasurer discussed the Investment property at Ebbsfleet which the REA bought a year ago for £475,000. The yield for renting out the property is 5.2% which is a good return on the investment. The property will be revalued next week. The current total worth of the charity is £11,389,336.

## ITEM 8- BRANCH ANNUAL FINANCIAL SUMMARY-UPDATE

18. The CEO is pleased with the amount of financial summaries that are coming in from the Branches so far which has been 52 from 100. 13 of the desk top audits have been received out of the 20 asked for by the auditors. The CEO discussed that this year has been a tough time for Treasurers and Chairman as there is no manual forms and it is now a fully automated system. The HQ cannot do the process for the branches so if there is a problem then the branch treasurer can be talked through the process to resolve the issue and any common faults that have been identified. Information is in the Treasurers Guide to help the treasurer through the process.

19. Mal Forder asked when the paperwork for the desk top audit will be returned. The Corps Treasurer explained that the auditors will start on the 20 February and finish two weeks later when they will give feedback.

## ITEM 9 - THE UNIT AND BRANCH SUPPORT FUND

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

- Only £50,000 of last year's grant was used and the CEO thinks that the lack of grants from the serving community was due to being busy, distracted or unsure who to put in an application. REA branches have still applied for Gazebos and equipment to assist when they are promoting the branch at recruiting events.
- There was some great projects which were wide ranging and included a holiday home from 36 Engr Regt.
- This 2023 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 will be three submissions next year in March, July and November with the cut-off date being the beginning of the month.
- 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. If the application is on old forms then it will be rejected.

21. Dave Ormsby has had an application from the Lowestoft branch for a Gazebo rejected by the East Anglian Group Director because of the changes to the REA badge due to the Queens passing. The Corps SM will speak to the RSM 33 Engr Regt to confirm changes will not be made for many years and the request be granted. **This has now happened.**

## ITEM 10 – REA STRATEGY

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

- The CEO wants to form a subcommittee to discuss a number of issues and asked for volunteers to be involved.
- The first concern is the Group and Branch structure and the number of Branch Officials. A number of branches are due to close and it's not due to lack of numbers but that there is nobody stepping forward to be branch officials and so some branch officials have been in the post for 25 – 30 years. Some officials are carrying out a number of positions and this is putting a lot of pressure on the individual. Branches failing to adapt and change will

close with the following branches in trouble; Scarborough, South Humberside, Chester and Crewe. In the future six branches a year could close if changes are not made.

- The CEO has also wants a subcommittee to look at the Group Structure. He believes that changing the group structure 5 years ago was a mistake, as having more groups with less branches in each group has reduced the critical mass which impacts the number of members attending events. The CEO wants less groups which are more effective and are geographically involved with regiments. Groups and Branches are personality driven and the REA need to encourage the right people to be Group and Branch Officials. Simon Tolley explained the process the South Midlands Group used to select a new Deputy Group Director and the CEO said this practice should be taken up by all groups.
- The CEO wants to make the Group and Branch structure fit for purpose going forward and if branches close he wants to ensure members do not disappear as they are the most important.
- The REA Website is continuing to develop and update all the time, with constant adaptations. Pleased to receive feedback to improve the site.
- The REA Community platform will come out in the next couple of months with committee members being asked to be involved in the testing. The aim is for HQ REA, Groups and Branches to communicate with each other and promote activities and events. *Sappercom* is the proposed name of the platform and this needs to be checked for copyright.
- Battlefield tours in Normandy in 2024 for 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Groups and Branches have contacted HQ REA recently - if anybody else is planning Battlefield tours and wants funding they need to send in their request soon.

#### ITEM 11 – TO NOTE THE ALLOCATION OF GRANTS TO ANNUAL EVENTS

23. Grant requests were received for the following events in 2023:

Event (a)	Requested Amount (b)	Amount Supported by HQ REA (c)
CM & Vets Weekend - Chatham	£8,500 (£8,500 in 2022)	£8,500
Minley Weekend	(£7,500 in 2019)	TBC
Chilwell Winter Dinner	(£8,500 in 2023)	£8,500
REA AGM and Dinner		£10,000

24. The CEO discussed the grants for the Corps annual events in 2023:

- The RSM of 1 RSME Regt confirmed that the Corps Memorial Weekend will be on the 15 – 17 September 2023 and briefed on what has been planned. He will find out how much grant is left from last years cancelled event and will confirm how much is required for this year.
- Simon Tolley will speak to 170 Group to see if they are going to stick with the Chilwell Winter Ball or revert back to a Chilwell weekend. Also is there a serving rep from 170 Gp to replace the RSM whose post has been removed.
- Mike Payne BEM will speak to the RSM of 3 RSME to see if there will be a Minley weekend this year.
- Rick Tootle is looking at an annual event in Scotland and will get back to the committee.
- Mal Forder discussed the 75th Anniversary of the Freedom of Ripon to the Corps in 2024. CEO will speak to the Corps Colonel to generate support for this event from the serving Corps. Rick Tootle volunteered to assist at this event if required.
- Ian Sidebottom said if any of the events required the mobile Sapper shop then to contact

him soon to get the date in the diary

## **ITEM 12 – CORPS MEMORIAL WEEKENDS AND EVENTS FOR 2023**

25. The Operations Manager discussed the following events for 2023 and gave an update:

2023 Diary. Events of interest for 2023 have been notified to HQ REA.

09 March	Corps Boxing at Chatham
19 March	South West Group Rededication of Standards at Truro Cathedral
15 April	Army v RAF Rugby Kingsholm Gloucester
13 May	Army v Navy Rugby Twickenham
08 June	The Royal Hospital Chelsea Founders Day Parade
3 - 6 July	Sapper Games at 1 RSME Regt Chatham.
TBC	Chilwell Weekend*
TBC	Minley Weekend*
3 September	March Armed Forces Fair
15 - 17 September	Corps Memorial Weekend*
7 October	REA AGM and Annual Dinner *
8 October	Sapper Sunday at Royal Hospital Chelsea
09 November	Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey
12 November	Remembrance Sunday

\*National Events

26. List of Committee Meetings for 2023 has been sent to all committee members.

## **ITEM 13 - ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

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

- Scott Wilson said this would be his last meeting.
- Lt Col Martyn Heffer asked if the reason for Reservists using Benevolence in 2022 can be investigated before the Trustees meeting. He also mentioned checking the domain name for the community platform which should also be mentioned at the Trustees meeting.
- Richard Bardsley had questions about the Group Yordex account which the CEO answered.

## **ITEM 14. – FINAL POINTS FROM THE CEO.**

28. The CEO thanked everyone for attending the meeting and said 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. The CEO thanked the Operations Manager who is retiring on the 31 March 2023. A replacement has been selected and the name will be out soon.

## **ITEM 15. - DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

29. The date and location of the next meeting is scheduled for 1000hrs 4 July 2023 at Chatham and on Zoom. This coincides with the Sapper Games.

18 January 2023

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 2023

1. **Trends 2022.** For the period 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2022 the number of benevolence cases submitted to the Association by SSAFA, The Royal British Legion and other organisations was 453, this is 53 cases more than for 2021 (400 cases). Of these 453 cases, 207 were submitted by SSAFA and 126 by TRBL; these figures are comparable to the same period in 2021.

### 2. Individual Benevolence Cases Considered during 2022 – 2019 (Excludes Weekly Allowances and Christmas Grants)

Category	2022	2021	2020	2019
Disabled & Illness	110	80	145	116
Aged	6	4	13	22
Widows	43	41	38	45
Unemployed	115	119	119	76
Miscellaneous	91	94	106	210
Grants not made	88	62	87	120
<b>Totals</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>589</b>

Regular – Reserve Case Comparisons	2022	2021	2020	2019
Regular Cases	342	329	401	433
Reservist Cases	23	09	20	36
Regular Grants	£201621	£225653.90	£244577	£272596.98
Reservist Grants	£9834	£2920	£15264.37	£21749.02

3. **Cost of Benevolence Cases Jan to Dec 2022.** The unaudited amount spent on benevolence cases for the period 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2022 was £211,445. This is £17,118.90 less than the same period in 2021. There was an increase in reservist grants with a rise of 237% over the previous year with the number of reservist cases increasing by 150% over the previous year.

It has been agreed to maintain the Benevolence budget at £300,000 for 2023.

### 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.

Further work is being undertaken by a working group established to assess options for of bringing of the REA reserved funds into use for benevolence assistance over the next few years.

5. **Grants to Charities.** At the last meeting of Council, the trustees agreed that with effect the grant to ABF would be increased from £60k, the grant to SSAFA would be increased from £30k by 10%.



## Corps SM Update

12 Jan 23

### Operations and global reach

- Sappers deployed in a number of locations around the world: Germany pre deployment training (PDT) to Estonia, Cyprus support to Ex Pinestick, Middle East in the Air Support role, Uganda delivering short term training teams (STTTs), Belize through Ex Mayan Star and Romania working in support of our US allies in theatre. Specialist trg and deployments continue for our Airborne, Commando, C-CBRN, Dive, EOD&S and GEO teams with allied partners around the world.

### Support to Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA)

- A number of our units were on standby during the Christmas period, supporting our nation. Teams deployed at short notice from Christmas Eve, delivering capability to the various sectors on strike, enabling our nation to move forward. These duties demonstrate our commitment to the nation at home, whilst still operating all over the world. Our sincere thanks to the REA for the welfare support to our deployed sappers over this period and of course our families of serving personnel, who continue to support during challenging times.

### Inflow

- We aim to recruit the best people from society and improve our diversity within the Corps. Our female service personnel now sits at 2.7%, which we will continue to grow over the next few years. The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) area helps us attract talented individuals, looking forward a trade and adventure - which we can certainly offer! In the workforce terms, we over slightly overbearing, and this will help us get to the right shape for Future Solider. REA support at the stable belt parades upon completion of the B2 Combat Engineer Course at Gibraltar Barracks is well received.

### Sport and AT

- We have 34 sports supported across the Corps, ranging from Angling, Football to Winter sports. The annual Corps Ski Camps took place in Austria and Sweden over the November/December period, introducing a number of new sappers to the sport whilst testing the seasoned experts in a demanding environment. We also have 25 sappers competing at the higher levels in various disciplines through the talented athletes sports scheme (TASS) - which our REA continue to support. Upcoming sporting events include the **Corps Boxing Championships 9 Mar 23 in Medway and the Sapper Games 3 - 6 July 23 hosted by 1 RSME**. Sport continues to be a 'look forward to' for our sappers.