

**ROYAL
ENGINEERS
ASSOCIATION**



THE SAPPER CHARITY

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

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See Distribution

14 Apr 2025

MINUTES OF THE COMBINED MANAGEMENT & RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT BROMPTON BARRACKS 4th APRIL 2025

Attendees:

Ken Kirk (KK)	-	CEO
Nick Gunnell (NG)	-	Operations Director
Ian Sidebottom (IS)	-	Corps Treasurer
Spencer Eardley (CSM)	-	Corps RSM
Fiona Louch (FL)	-	Business Manager
Claire James (CJ)	-	Chair of Recruitment Committee member
Andrew Brown (AB)	-	Recruitment & Management Committee member
Graham Doughty (GD)	-	Recruitment Committee member
Mike Facchini (MF)	-	Recruitment Committee member
Tim Harnett (TH)	-	Recruitment Committee member
Michael Payne (MP)	-	Recruitment & Management Committee member
Kevin Street (KS)	-	Recruitment Committee member
David Waters (DW)	-	Management Committee member
Julian Allerhead (JA)	-	Management Committee member
Mike Facchini (MF)	-	Management Committee member
Peter Luscombe (PL)	-	Management Committee member
Rick Tootle (RT)	-	Management Committee member
Phil Taylor (PT)	-	Management Committee member

1. **Opening Remarks.** KK welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked those who had travelled down for giving up their time.

2. **To confirm the minutes of the previous Management & Recruitment meetings.**

a. **Management Minutes. Proposer:** Rick Tootle **Seconded:** Kevin Street

b. **Recruitment Minutes: Proposer:** Andy Brown **Seconded:** Mike Payne

3. **To consider matters arising from the proceedings of the previous Management and Recruitment meetings.** MP raised the issue of Boardable having connectivity issues with Apple products. **KK** explained that Microsoft Teams would be replacing Boardable in the near future.

4. **REA HQ Update.** The **CSM** gave a brief update on the serving Corps including: 29 Fd Sqn was no longer disbanding, recruiting remained healthy however retention remains an issue and will likely increase as central government pushes for more construction workers.

5. **Benevolence Report.** **NG** provided a brief overview of Benevolence. The increased data collection from late 2023 and all of 2024 has resulted in clear trends being identified. Notably the demographics of those requesting benevolence.

6. **2025 Events**

a. **Sapper Sunday.** Sapper Sunday costs the Sapper Charity £1,900 to run (feeding). Individuals attending have been asked to donate as little or as much as they like. Currently the average donation (from 50 people) is £10.

b. **Gibraltar Weekend.** The ticket price for this year's event is £135. It is currently expected that 250 people will be attending.

c. **Corps Memorial Weekend.** Corps Memorial Weekend Tickets have been available for purchase since December 2024. Currently 50 tickets have been sold at a price of £35.

d. **Chilwell Winter Ball.** Ticket prices for this year's Chilwell Winter Ball will be £30. The event is to be placed on Eventbrite to allow wider participation as currently only those with SapperCom and Branch Secretaries can access. The Sapper Charity Grants & Funds Manager will liaise with the organiser to ensure that funds are transferred accordingly.

7. **Finance Update.** **IS** explained the financial position of the Sapper Charity, the value of which had dropped due to the turbulence in global markets.

8. **Overview of Branch Annual Financial Summaries.** **KK** gave an overview of the Branch Annual Financial Summaries submission. Compared to previous years the process had not been as successful, with some submission being late and inaccurate. Help is offered and guidance given to those treasurers seeking it, however it is the branches that don't seek assistance who often have discrepancies.

9. **Amalgamation of the Recruitment and Management Committees into the Operations Committee.** **NG** led a discussion on the amalgamation of the Recruitment and Management Committees. The two committees have near identical agendas with varying levels of output. Both meet every six months. It was agreed that the committee should be amalgamated and meet 3 times a year. Operations Committee Members will consist of

Deputy Group Directors from new Group boundaries and other roles (tbc). The proposed new Group boundaries which are attached to these minutes will be proposed out of committee to the Management Committee before the end of May. **NG**.

10. **Discussion Topic #1. Financial Risk held at Branch Level.** **KK** introduced the topic and explained that there some branches were holding in excess of £20,000 in their branch account and the risks that this represented financially and reputationally. After a discussion and input from members the following was decided that the following will be proposed to the Board of Trustees:

- a) Branches are not to hold more than £6,000 in their accounts when submitted their annual financial summaries. Thus, will allow for the temporary holding of excess funds i.e. organising a function.
- b) A distinction must be made between what the Sapper Charity policy will be and the RBLs. i.e. we do not wish to take funds and ownership of funds away from branches. **NG**
- c) Establish engagement between the REA Grants & Funds Manager and Treasurers. **NG**
- d) **KK** to speak to branches who hold over £20,000 to understand how the risks can be reduced.
- e) The Head Office will proactively liaise engage with Branch Secretaries and committee members to reduce friction. **NG**

10. **Discussion Item #2.** **KK** led the discussion on the review of Group boundaries. It is recognised that in places the Group boundaries, which changed approx. 5 years ago has had mixed success. It was also noted that the degree to which Regiments (who are aligned to REA branches) are involved is also inconsistent i.e. 24 Cdo Engr Regt is very proactive, 32 Engr Regt have had no engagement with branches. The realignment of Group boundaries will be presented out of committee within the next 3 months. **NG**

12. **Discussion Item #3.** Based on the information in the Branch Outreach Paper, analysis of the Corps Pulse Survey and personal experience members were invited to answer the following questions:

Question	Common Themes
By maintaining the current structure what does the REA look like in 10 years' time?	1) A more cohesive organisation 2) Local and regional branches closing
What should the REA look like in 10 years' time?	1) A mixture of branches and events. 2) Less associated with a drinking culture 3) More social, less rigidity and formality
What's needed to keep the REA relevant?	1) Increased communication and engagement from joining and onwards

	<p>2) A culture of helping Sapper Family members in different ways i.e. get together, reunions, fundraising etc.</p> <p>3) Publicised examples of benevolence</p> <p>4) Ensure that the serving members of the corps and their families have an understanding of the purpose of the Sapper Charity.</p> <p>5) Information needs to become more accessible.</p> <p>6) Professionalise the link between Deputy Group directors and Group secretaries to allow co-ordinated activity.</p>
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NG added that the Pulse Survey identified that Gibraltar Barracks is vital to engagement with the Corps. Every single person in the Corps receives training from either 3 RSME Regiment or the Royal Engineers Warfare Wing both of which come under the Command of the Commandant RSME Gp. Therefore, engagement and establishing a connection with individuals whilst at Gibraltar Barracks is key. The courses include: B1 and B2 Combat Engineer, PNCO, Junior Commanders Course, Field Sgts, QMSI and Troop Commanders courses. In addition, attempting to brief and capture individuals when they leave is important however it is more difficult to achieve due to the geographical dispersion of personnel leaving the Corps and the multiple points of contact.

13. **Discussion Topic #4.** The Sapper Charity. Members were asked on their opinions of the name / title “The Sapper Charity”. Feedback included:

- a. Surprise when it was initially introduced
- b. There was no explanation

14. **PT** wanted to understand why the AGM had moved to the Gibraltar Weekend? **KK** explained that the President was no longer being able to attend Corps Memorial Weekend due to personal commitments and there was no other large Sapper gathering between now and the end of the year. **KK** reminded the committee members that online attendance would be possible and it likely that attendance will be greater than last year when it was held in Brompton Barracks. On discussion with the committee, it was agreed that the rental cost of group transport (i.e. vehicles carrying 12+ more REA members) will be paid for by HQ REA on the production of an invoice.

15. **PT** asked **CSM** the rules regarding the use of military transport for CO and RSM of 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment attending an REA function in Glasgow. **PT** is to send the question to **NG** who in turn will send the email to **CSM**.

16. **Date of next meeting.** Dependent on the outcome of the Group boundaries discussion but likely no later than 31st Oct 25

Proposed Group Boundaries as at - 29 April 2025

<p>Ubique and Overseas Ubique sappers Cyprus Fiji Gibraltar Middle East (Gulf)) North America Willich</p> <p>National Group Deputy Group Director – No Change Airborne Engrs Boxing Blue Light Football Junior Leaders Mil Survey (Geo) Riggies Swimming and Waterpolo</p> <p>London Group Group Director – 101 Engr Regt (EOD&S) Deputy Group Director – Graham Palmer Group Secretary – 101 Engr Regt (EOD&S) Central London Peckham Sappers in the City (Social) West London</p> <p><u>South & South East Group</u></p>	<p>South West Group Deputy Group Director Deputy Group Director – No Change Group Secretary – No Change Commando Engrs (Nat Branch) Newton Abbot Plymouth Truro-Cornwall Taunton</p> <p>West of England Deputy Group Director – 22 Engr Regt Deputy Group Director – VACANT Group Secretary – 22 Engr Regt Andover & Winchester Armoured Engrs (Nat Branch) Bath Bridgwater & District Bristol Gloucester & District Swindon Weymouth White Horse Sappers (Social)</p> <p>South Wales Group Deputy Group Director Deputy Group Director – No Change Group Secretary – No Change Cardiff Chepstow Malvern & District Monmouth Newport and Cwmbran Pembrokeshire & District Swansea</p>	<p>Midlands Group Deputy Group Director – 66 Wks Gp Deputy Group Director – Mr Kevin Street Group Secretary – 66 Wks Gp Birmingham Cannock Chesterfield Derby & District Leicester Lichfield & Tamworth Nottingham Stratford upon Avon & District Stafford Walsall Wolverhampton</p> <p>Yorkshire Group Group Director – 21 Engr Regt Deputy Group Director – Mr S Scott Group Secretary – 21 Engr Regt Amphibious Engrs (Nat Branch) Bradford Bridlington Doncaster Sappers Social Club Doncaster Sappers-South Yorkshire Hull & District Leeds Ripon & District Scarborough Sheffield Wakefield Whitby & District</p>
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Annex A
Proposed Group
Boundaries

<p>Group Director – 1 RSME Regt Deputy Group Director – Mr A Brown Group Secretary – 1 RSME Regt Brighton Eastbourne Gravesend & District Invicta Sappers (Social) Maidstone Medway Plant Sapper Rugby (Nat Branch) Thanet & District Tunbridge Wells</p> <p>East Anglian Group Group Director – 21 Engr Regt Deputy Group Director – VACANT Group Secretary – 33 Engr Regt Bedford Bomb Disposal (Nat Branch) Cambridge Colchester Cycling (Nat Branch) Fenland Sapper Luton Lowestoft & District Peterborough</p>	<p>Central Southern Group Group Director – 3 RSME Regt Deputy Group Director – Mike Payne Group Secretary – 3 RSME Regt Bournemouth & District Communications (Nat Branch) Diving (Nat Branch) Isle Of Wight Minley Postal & Courier (Nat Branch) Solent & District</p> <p>NI & Scotland Group Group Director – 71 Engr Regt Deputy Group Director – Ron McGregor Group Secretary – 71 Engr Regt Aberdeen Dundee Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders Fife Forth Valley Glasgow & West Of Scotland Highlands & Islands Lanarkshire Northern Ireland Paisley Riders (Nat Branch)</p>	<p>North West Group Group Director – 75 Engr Regt Deputy Group Director – Col (Retd) Waters Group Secretary – 75 Engr Regt Birkenhead Blackpool Chester Crewe Lancashire (formally Preston) Liverpool and Merseyside Manchester Potteries St Helens Warrington</p>
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