

ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION



THE SAPPER CHARITY

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**All communications to be
addressed to:**

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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 **Seconders:** Kevin Street
- b. **Recruitment Minutes: Proposer:** Andy Brown **Seconders:** 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 2) A culture of helping Sapper Family members in different ways i.e. get together, reunions, fundraising etc. 3) Publicised examples of benevolence

	<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

N R Gunnell
Operations Director

Proposed Group Boundaries as at 9th April 2025

Ubique and Overseas

Ubique sappers
Cyprus
Fiji
Gibraltar
Middle East (Gulf))
North America
Willich

National Group

Deputy Group Director – No Change

Airborne Engrs (Nat Branch)
Boxing (Nat Branch)
Blue Light (Nat Branch)
Football (Nat Branch)
Junior Leaders (Nat Branch)
Mil Survey (Geo) (Nat Branch)
Riggies (Nat Branch)
Swimming and Waterpolo (Nat Branch)

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

South & South East Group

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

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

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)

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

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

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

North East Group

Group Director – 32 Engr Regt

Deputy Group Director –

Group Secretary – 32 Engr Regt

Hartlepool
Newcastle & District
West Cumberland

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

Annex A
Proposed Group
Boundaries

Sapper Rugby (Nat Branch)
Thanet & District
Tunbridge Wells

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

Scotland & NI Group
Group Director – 71 Engr Regt
Deputy Group Director – Ron
McGregor
Group Secretary – 71 Engr Regt
Aberdeen
Dundee
Edinburgh, Lothians and Boarder
Fife
Forth Valley
Glasgow & West Of Scotland
Highlands & Islands
Lanarkshire
Northern Ireland
Paisley
Riders (Nat Branch)

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