

**ROYAL
ENGINEERS
ASSOCIATION**



THE SAPPER CHARITY

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

All communications to be addressed to:

The CEO
RE Association
Brompton Barracks
Chatham
Kent ME4 4UG
☎ 01634 847005
💻 www.reahq.org.uk
✉ info@reahq.org.uk

02 Oct 2025

**MINUTES OF THE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS
ASSOCIATION, HELD AT RAVELIN BUILDING AND ON BOARDABLE ON FRIDAY 19th
SEPT 2025**

Attended¹

Claire James (**CJ**) – Chair
Martin Heffer (**HF**) – Trustee
Ken Kirk (**KK**) – CEO
Simon Scott (**SS**) – Yorkshire Group (Des) Rep
Ian Sidebottom (**IS**) – RECCT Treasurer
Mike Faccinni (**MF**) – North-East Group (Des) Rep
Josh Brown (**JB**) – West England (Des) Rep
Tim Harnett (**TH**) – South-West (Des) Rep
Roy Lowe (**RL**) – South Wales (Des) Rep
Andy Brown (**AB**) – South-East (Des) Rep
Kevin Street (**KS**) – Midlands (Des) Rep
Richard Bardsley (**RB**) – Previous Management Committee Rep
David Waters (**DW**) – NW (Des) Rep
Rick Tootle (**RT**) – Captain of Standards, Ops Committee Member (Des)
Nick Gunnell (**NG**) – Secretary
Aaron Hewit (**AH**) – Observer

Apologies

Alan Scholey – Previous Management Committee
Mike Payne – Central Southern Group (Des) Rep
Peter Luscombe – Recruitment Committee
Simon Tolley – Previous Management Committee
Paul Moore – National (Des) Rep.
Graham Doughty – Previous Management Committee

1. **Welcome and Purpose of the Meeting – KK & CJ**
2. **To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting. KK**

Proposer: Rick Tootle

¹ Des (Designated) signifies that the individual will remain on the Ops committee in the new year after the Group Boundary change.

Seconded: David Waters

3. **To consider matters arising from the previous meeting**

- a. Financial & Branch Funds – to be discussed later.
- b. Online attendance of the AGM was not effective **MF**.
- c. New Group Boundaries – **TH** requested confirmation which group Taunton would be in as of 1st January 2026. **NG** confirmed that Taunton would be in the SW Group and that he would inform Taunton Branch.

4. **Board of Trustees Update**

- a. Strategy Booklet to be produced and distributed to the Association and Field Army by 01 Jan 2026. **KK**
- b. Staff hired to fulfil the strategy (Ops Managers North and South and Benevolence Case Worker now employed). The initial focus of the three staff members will be the serving corps and dependents. **KK**
- c. There is expected to be an increase in Benevolence Requests which will result in increased pressure on funds. **KK**
- d. **Risk Register.** CEO must report to the board about the Association's risks. There is an increase in scrutinization of registered charities from the Charities Commission. **KK**
- e. As part of the strategy, processes and metrics have been formalised to allow the Board to track progress. These metrics (primarily the dashboard) will be shared with the Operations Committee. **CJ, MH, KK**.
- f. **DW** observed that the national charities tend to think big and act big, forgetting the smaller charities and impact on the ground.

5. **HQ RE Update – Nil update provided.**

6. **Benevolence Update.** Benevolence spending remains within forecast. The dedicated Sapper Charity Case Worker has the following priorities **NG**:

- a. Sapper Charity Children's Fund beneficiaries
- b. Serving Personnel
- c. Serving Personnel dependents
- d. Veterans and their dependents

7. **Head Office Sapper Charity Update**

a. **Forecast of Events NG:**

- (1) 29th Nov 2025 - Chilwell Winter Ball (Chetwyn Barracks)
- (2) 25th Apr 2026 AGM & Sapper Gathering (Royal Armouries)
- (3) 10th May 2026 - Sapper Sunday (Royal Hospital Chelsea)

- (4) 12th - 14th June 2026 - Gibraltar Weekend
- (5) 29th Jun - 2nd Jul 2026 - Sapper Games (Perham Down, Tidworth)
- (6) 4th Jul 2026 – Lancashire Cenotaph Centenary Ball
- (7) 18th - 20th Sep 2026 - Corps Memorial Weekend (Brompton Barracks)

b. Except for (6) all events will be on Eventbrite.

c. The Plymouth Branch will be holding its Winter ball on the 22nd Nov 2026 (**TH**). The event has grown to a point where it is now a Sapper centric event.

d. Emerging Patterns and Themes (NG)

- (1) Newsletter is being received well - approx. 10,000 subscribers
- (2) SapperCom membership over 1,500
- (3) Low level events - Vehicle painting, RHC tours, Normandy painting, Houses of Parliament have proved popular.

e. Branch Accounts Update (**KK**). Due to consistent errors identified by the annual audit such as missing records and inaccessible funds (due to deaths) the Board has instructed KK to centralise Branch Funds. The centralisation will further protect the Association from mismanagement of funds as happened with Captain Tom. The branches that have already centralised (approx. 25 branches) have their accounts managed resulting in:

- (1) Branches having access to their funds and accounts
- (2) Accounts still run by Branch Treasurers and designated signatory
- (3) No requirement for an annual financial summary
- (4) Monthly accounts provided by the HQ to branches
- (5) No bank charges
- (6) Greater interest rate dividend
- (7) Reduces the burden on Branch Treasurers
- (8) Branches retain control of their funds, but they are managed (tracked and audited) centrally.

No issues identified with the branches who have moved their funds. Feedback on the proposal contained in a draft letter was requested. The feedback was as follows:

- f. Increase in fidelity and scrutinisation of charity activity needs emphasising **DW**
- g. Expressed concern at the process of having to obtain an invoice as branches have to pay up front for services and are unable to ask for an invoice to be paid later **SS MF**
- h. Communication is key to introducing the change. **TH**
- i. Surprised at the announcement and questioned the requirement to limit branch funds? **MF**
- j. When branch funds are centralised, there is no need for a cap on funds. **IS**
- k. Branches could carry a float which could be paid for up front. **IS**
- l. The asset register for branches will be managed by the HQ. **KK**
- m. The interest received needs to be relative to what branches hold. **KS**
- n. The role of Branch Treasurer will continue to exist, but the role will change. **KS**
- o. Head Office is not able to spend or access branch funds as it will only be accessed by authorisation from the Branch. **KK**
- p. Points m, n & o need to be included when communicating to branches to reassure members. **KS**
- q. Clarity on Group funds required. **RT**
- r. Branches will not be granted permission to open up branch accounts

independently. **KK**

s. Risk of the external pressure to restrict funding and expenditure i.e. branches restricted on what they can spend money on. **MF**

t. Criteria for expenditure will remain unchanged i.e. the charitable objectives.

KK

u. The change in how branch funds are managed are not about curtailing freedoms it is about protecting the charity's freedom to operate. The input from the committee is vital in communicating the changes and finding solutions such as the branch float. **CJ**

v. Charity law has got tighter; a solution has to be relevant for branches big and small and stands up to scrutiny from the Charity Commission. **HF**

w. A subcommittee to be formed consisting of **IS, KK, KS, MF (+treasurer)** and **AB** to meet mid-October to finalise a solution.

x. **KK, CJ, MH** to provide direction to the sub-committee.

8. **Charity Number Case Study.** Branches are not to use the charity number for funding, bank accounts or any other activity. This has been the case since 2004,5,6 when the Controller informed all branches about the misuse / use of the charity number. This will be included in the rules. **KK**

9. **Financial Summary. IS**

a. **CUBS Grants.** 34 grants given. 26 from Units and 8 from Branches. £109,000 spent

b. **Investment Portfolio.** Approx £10.6 million

c. **Dividends.** Expected to be £420,000 for 2025

d. **Property.** 5% and 4.5% return

e. **Overall value.** Approx. £11.8 million

10. **Future of the Operations Committee. NG**

a. Consist of Deputy Group Directors and key individuals (i.e. Capt. of Standards)

b. Cross over and identify mutually beneficial activity of the branches and units

c. Future proposal to support funding for Deputy Group Director travel

d. Future proposal for the funding model of Group funds.

e. **MF** raised concerns about the impact of no contact with Group Director's.

11. **Any Other Business.**

a. **KS** proposed to have it recorded to thank **Allan Scholey** for his years of service and contributions to the various committees.

12. **Date of Next Meeting.** 8th January 2026. To be held online and in the Ravelin Building.

N R Gunnell
Ops Director

Minutes Approved

Date:

Chair: