ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION
THE SAPPER CHARITY

Patron: His Majesty The King

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

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

Royal Engineers Association (REA) Board of Trustees

Minutes of the Meeting

Date: 5 September 2025
Time: 10:30am – 1:00pm BST
Venue: Tate & Lyle, 5 Marble Arch, London, W1H 7EJ

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1. Welcome and Introductions

- **Chair:** Alastair Dickinson called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees, including new members and guests. Special welcome was extended to David Ellison, who will be involved in the risk management discussion .
- Attendees introduced themselves for the transcript and to facilitate identification in the automated record.

2. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

- Apologies were noted from Mark Lancaster (delayed arrival) and other absentees.
- Attendees were reminded to declare any conflicts of interest as they arise .

3. Approval of Previous Minutes

- The minutes of the previous meeting (31 May 2025) were reviewed and approved as factually correct .

4. Matters Arising

- **Safeguarding Policy:** The policy was revised to include reference to indirect harm risks and submitted to the Charity Commission. The board agreed to further amend the wording from 'prompt' to 'immediate' reporting for safeguarding concerns and to include provisions for self-harm. Safeguarding will now be a standing agenda item at every meeting, even if only to note 'nothing to report' .

5. Chief Royals Board Update

- Alastair Dickinson and Dickie Hawkins reported on the ongoing success of the core strategy and proposed the creation of a strategy booklet for board review in November. The booklet will be concise, engaging, and regularly updated, with both electronic and video formats considered. Chris Toulmin will lead the drafting process .

6. Branch Cash Holdings and Airborne Merger

- Updates were provided on targeted communications to branches regarding cash holdings, with positive engagement and improved understanding. The airborne branch merger is nearing completion, with a final meeting scheduled before official communication is sent. The process is on track for completion by year-end, led by Becky .

7. Sapper App Development

- Engagement with Six Circles regarding the Sapper app continues, with plans for migration to Android and iOS. Over 1,400 members are registered. Funding approval is contingent on final costings and confirmation of cross-platform compatibility, to be reviewed in November. The board discussed securing related domain names to prevent impersonation .

8. Financial Reports and Reserves Policy

- Ian Sidebottom and Jonathan Mark Ruddy presented the financial forecast, highlighting strong legacy income and underspend. The board debated the appropriate level of reserves, the use of restricted funds, and the need for a strategic review at the next meeting. Legal advice will be sought regarding the creation of restricted funds .
- Investments total just under £10.5 million, with property rental yields slightly reduced but dividend income increased due to BlackRock's shift towards income generation .

9. Risk Register Review

- David Ellison reviewed the board's risk register, confirming compliance with best practice and recommending tightening risk definitions, benchmarking, and linking risks to strategy. The principle of proportionality was emphasised. The risk register will be used as a live management tool at the operational level .

10. REA Dashboard Development

- Chris Toulmin demonstrated the new REA dashboard, highlighting its capabilities for real-time data analysis. Board feedback included requests for trend analysis, cost-to-go projections, and alignment with agreed KPIs. Plans are in place to expand access for committee members and refine dashboard content .

11. Fundraising, Outreach, and Legacy Initiatives

- Rowan Adams and Ken Kirk reported on fundraising progress, successful challenge events, and the importance of case studies. The newsletter has driven new legacy pledges and improved engagement. The board discussed formalising donor recognition and enhancing outreach to officers and branches .

12. Museum Funding and Relationship Management

- The board debated the renewal of funding for the Royal Engineers Museum, expressing concerns about value for money, outreach, and dependency. It was agreed to invite the museum to the November meeting to present their case, justify past expenditure, and discuss future plans. A formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) will be developed .

13. Committee Reports

- **Benevolence Committee:** Cases and expenditure remain within forecast. A new caseworker has been appointed, with expectations of increased requests for support .
- **Operations Committee:** The merger of two committees is scheduled for the next meeting, with changes to group boundaries and increased focus on serving soldiers before expanding to branches .

14. Action Items

- Draft a strategy and impact document reflecting the five-year strategy and proposed restricted fund buckets for board review in November (Ken Kirk, Chris Toulmin).
- Research and report on costs, timelines, and capabilities for developing the Sapper app and secure relevant domain names (Chris Toulmin).
- Distribute a forecast of upcoming events to chief executives of Corps charities (Ken Kirk).

- Circulate David Ellison's risk management recommendations and update the risk register (David Ellison, Mark Ruddy).
- Update the board dashboard to include agreed KPIs, trends, cost-to-go data, and metrics for Sappacom/app and legacies (Chris Toulmin).
- Seek legal advice on the process for the organisation acting as donor to its own restricted funds (Ken Kirk, Jeffrey Jupp KC).
- Develop and implement a formalised system for thanking donors (Ken Kirk, Rowan Adams, Dickie Hawkins).
- Invite the museum to present at the November meeting and discuss future funding and partnership framework .

15. Any Other Business

- Request for earlier distribution of meeting paperwork was noted .

16. Date of Next Meeting

- **21 November 2025** at Royal Hospital Chelsea, 10:30am .

Meeting closed at 1:00pm.

Signed

Maj Gen (retd) A Dickinson CBE

President REA

November 2025