

**MINUTES of the 25TH ANNUAL GROUP CONFERENCE of the MOTORCYCLE
ACTION GROUP (UK)
HELD ON SATURDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER 1998
AT SCARBOROUGH SPA CONFERENCE CENTRE, GRAND HALL.**

[1] MEETING OPENED AT 1.15pm BY NICH BROWN (Conference Chairman, National Vice-Chair)

[2] Opening Address by National Chairman

Neil Liversidge welcomed everyone to this our 25th Annual Conference, expressed his real gratitude for all the efforts made over the past year by all our active members and officers, and stressed how much we had indeed achieved. It should be acknowledged that despite so many obstacles and difficulties MAG is a formidable force for motorcycling. His speech was very much up-beat, and reflected the optimism that keeps us on a forward route - no dispirited pessimism here !

[3] Manifestos and Reports by National Officers

All as circulated in the advance Supplement. There were no verbal/late updates to add here.

Introduction of new Chief Executive, JIM HARRIS.

The Chairman briefly introduced the new MAG UK Chief Executive, Jim Harris; Jim comes to us from Courtaulds plc, and it's hoped and envisaged that his high level business management expertise can bring substantial progress in improving the efficient operation of MAG's general administration and presentation.

Jim Harris addressed the conference to outline his intentions and hopes. He advised of the office move to new premises, a physical disruption initially which should however allow better operation as the new place is much more suitable for our needs through to next century.

A new Phone System has been installed which permits much better telephone access for all those calling Central Office; this improvement has been noticed by most callers already.

New Database is under final development by MAG member Rae Miller (& Brian Williams) - thank you Rae & Brian) - which is expected to rectify virtually all of the previous data problems encountered. This is a major step forward which we hope to fully implement during October.

Attention to stock control and systems hardware is also underway, again with the help of MAG members outside the office. Notably Nik Macve who is developing software to run stock control.

Staffing problems experienced in the summer, with Trudy away on Maternity leave and Trish having left us at the same time for a new career, have now been resolved and we have a new Finance clerk, Janet Batchelor - Trudy is also back so work is much more settled now.

Long time workers Neil Andrews and Craig Carey-Clinch have also been most helpful to Jim.

Cost reductions allied to improved processing, especially on Renewal Reminders, are underway too.

Better Banking service is being looked at; we may well change banks to achieve this.

Of major concern is the aim to widen the general appeal of MAG to motorcyclists; we have to attract more riders as members - our overall figures have shown no real growth for a few years and this must be addressed. Several marketing ideas and promotional options are being reviewed to this end. We face the new century very soon and must be in shape to welcome the new era and provide what most riders want!

In closing, Jim stressed that all should remember that Central Office is here to help - keep in touch and we will do our best to help always Thank You All.

[4] Presentation of Annual Accounts

Accounts breakdown attached to these Minutes. Treasurer Julie Toms was in poor voice, suffering from an illness picked up whilst on the continent for the Euro Demo, so Nich Brown read out her report on the year's finances. Most aspects dealt with, in concise clear fashion.

Question Time on Annual Accounts

There were some questions raised. These were mainly to clarify the meaning of allocated expenditure headings in the accounts list. For example, it was asked what "Outside Subscriptions" referred to.

Julie explained that this covers items such as external publications (magazines, political information service newsletters, etc), plus membership of review and consultative bodies, etc

At end of questions, Neil Liversidge thanked Julie for providing such clear accounts, which have dramatically reduced the level of queries, and confusion that once prevailed. She must be our best Treasurer since Kev Garrington (who left the post in the 80s?). WARM APPLAUSE for Julie.

[5] ELECTION OF NEW COMMITTEE

All posts are uncontested; National Officers due for election are all as per the Supplement and each is offering to continue for a further year.

It was asked if conference felt it most appropriate to vote "en-bloc" for all positions in these circumstances - AGREED by Large Majority.

New Committee thus duly put for election ALL ELECTED by Large Majority.

Additional Item

ADDRESS by Industry Lobbyist, JONATHAN ROBERTS.

Jonathan was introduced and welcomed by Nich Brown, Conference Chair. Jonathan works for "Citigate", the official lobbying company who represent the motorcycle industry to Westminster and all major political bodies. They work closely with MAG (Craig Carey-Clinch our linchpin here) and others to promote motorcycle interests to the political powers.

Jonathan opened by briefly explaining the history of the industry lobby efforts by Citigate (under different title in the past), largely on behalf of the manufacturers. In recent years much more liaison with rider groups had been notable, with MAG very much to the fore in this work.

The productive results were now very evident, with Motorcycling on the National Transport Agenda for the first time in history this year. This could only have been achieved by co-operation between all interest groups, and MAG has been a pivotal and essential part toward the successes seen thus far.

He related much else with regard to the successful political lobbying efforts - Bikers Are Voters, the campaign set up and promoted by MAG featuring as the most successful for many years, having been taken up happily by Industry, a mark of its credibility.

The success in getting motorcycles recognised formally in transport planning, great progress though it is, merely represents the beginning of an extended campaign to ensure our interests are considered in future - this is the end of the start, but still only a beginning! Where MAG can make the biggest impact is in the local lobbying of councils etc to ensure that motorcycles are recognised in all local area traffic schemes. The government are passing much responsibility to councils to implement recommendations and future success will depend heavily on the efforts of local active volunteers - something MAG is better placed to provide than perhaps any other motorcycling organisation.

In closing, Jonathan thanked everyone in MAG for the much appreciated effective work contributed to these lobbying efforts and looked forward to continued excellent co-operation in future. Thank You!

Prior to Advance Proposals, Conference Chair Nich Brown spoke briefly to appraise everyone of the sustained dedication of National Chairman, NEIL LIVERSIDGE. It is now Neil's TENTH year as MAG Chairman, a remarkable milestone.

He made humorous note of the working relationship between Neil, himself, and others, over recent years. Not always of the same mind at times, and occasionally at loggerheads, the productive progress and improvements achieved during this long time steering the Group surely speak for themselves. Nich summed up by listing what he felt were the most notable qualities Neil Liversidge had brought to the post, and displayed for the great benefit of MAG as a whole - Tenacity, Clarity, Honesty, Consistency, and all the time Dynamic. A Very Strong Leader!

GENERAL APPLAUSE FROM ALL PRESENT.

Neil responded briefly, thanking Nich for his kind words and all present for their freely

given applause - for our volatile and forceful Chairman this was a remarkably quiet response (!) and showed perhaps just a little embarrassment at the praise spoken and the warmth of the general feeling from both floor and stage of conference

[6] ADVANCE PROPOSALS

(As per sheet circulated at the door - attached at end of minutes for reference)

[I] LIFE MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT OPTIONS

The intention of this is to enable more members to attain the Life Member status without compelling them to find a large sum in one go - many members happily commit £15 a month or more already and by allowing these to count toward a rolling total payment amount that, when reached, would then qualify them for the Life option. Proposer Alan Elgey agreed that it would be sensible to encourage all those taking up this option to continue giving an annual donation equivalent to the standard renewal fee in order to safeguard MAG's income in subsequent years. It was envisaged that significant numbers may leave their monthly £15 orders running after having "qualified" for Life status in practice.

After brief discussion, which exhibited that most were in support of the proposal, it was put to the Vote -

FOR - LARGE MAJORITY. None recorded as voting against. PASSED.

[ii] CHAIRMAN'S PROPOSAL - "PATCH CLUBS" ETC. AND MAG EVENTS. [Proposal attached](#)

The Chairman spoke first to endorse his proposal, stressing that this package of guidelines had been requested many times in recent years by organisers of events. He had now drafted these guidelines to be a help to those unsure of how to deal with what can be troubling situations at times. There was no intent to force anybody to "toe a party line", every situation holds its own difficulties which need to be assessed each time with often purely local considerations.

He gave a number of examples of unpleasant incidents dating most notably back to the Yorkshire Biking Bonanza in 1989, with others covering the years right up to the current season - of particular concern of course the disastrous cancellation of Magna Carta in July.

This is a civilised society and we should not put up with appalling behaviour such as suffered all too often. He was often advised by people that we should do nothing to antagonise the miscreants; alas, appeasement cannot always work short term and invariably creates long term serious problems. World history is littered with examples of those who have tried to appease unreasonable aggressors and who have always failed, often with extreme consequences. We must never be tempted to follow such well-documented failures.

Please support these measures, have the strength to put the whole package through as it stands in order to ensure MAG benefits in future. Compromises should not be considered; they would weaken the resolve and water down the proposals.

This topic provided considerable debate and many contributed to the discussion. The apprehension of some was noted, though there did seem to be a majority in general support of the principles

Ian Mutch spoke strongly in support of the Chairman - stressing that MAG is not and never has been like the gangs that can plague the biking scene, and this must be seen and made very clear. Most such clubs declare themselves to be outside of the law, where MAG is both in principle and practice very much within the law. Let us be firm in stating that we have no connection with any of them, and ensure that is understood by all.

It should not be missed that in making such distinctions we do not needlessly tarnish anybody's reputation - all those who can behave reasonably and within the law, and who are prepared to consistently display such reason, shall always be welcome at our events.

Some speakers were uneasy about some of the "Four Points" that sum up what the National Committee can do if asked to help local organisers. Such concerns were noted, with a proposal to amend the package by deletion of items 1 and 2 considered.

Most however spoke to endorse the principles and the full package - the sentiment "enough is enough" voiced to considerable applause.

One speaker advised that a copy of the proposal had been viewed by a large club who might regard themselves as "affected" by it - bringing the perhaps surprising (to us) response that MAG must follow such a course or future troubles would be inevitable and probably increase. By being seen to take a firm but fair stance within the Law, MAG would be much better served and would gain far more genuine respect than by watered down measures or any hint of appeasement.

The Chairman spoke to close, responding to the various points made during discussion. He urged all to accept the full, unaltered proposal, as anything else would be ineffective and seen as weakness by those who have caused problems in the past.

The proposal to amend by deleting points 1 + 2 was then put to the vote -

DEFEATED BY LARGE MAJORITY.

The full proposal as attached was then put for vote - PASSED BY LARGE MAJORITY, as drafted.

[iii] EVENT PRICING

This proposal was acknowledged as received but due to administration problems had failed to show on the sheet given out at the door of conference -

"We propose that MAG adopt a universal charging system for rallies and shows, as follows -

Pre Book - 3 stage pricing; Full Members, Associate Members, Non Members

Gate - Full Members, All others.

This would operate on an individual basis, with no block booking stipulation.”

Proposed by Peter Green, 84006 Seconded by Linda Young, 70918.

It was explained by the proposers that no set rates would be stipulated, merely this simple structure, thus permitting maximum flexibility for organisers.

Discussion produced the by now traditional range of views for and against such structures for pricing event charges. After some debate, the Chairman suggested a simplified - after brief discussion the proposers indicated their acceptance of the revised proposal draft, as follows -

“It is proposed that MAG events be advance-priced according to the following principle -

Individual Full Members - Cheapest, Associate members - Next cheapest, Non members - Dearest.”

This was then put to the vote;

REJECTED BY LARGE MAJORITY - FAILED.

[7] LATE PROPOSALS

Late proposals submitted and with the agreement of the proposers put to conference for note only without vote:

[a] MAG Gift Vouchers.

It is not essential to detail all the technicalities suggested; it is noted that this suggestion is accepted by the NC as a Good Idea to be acted upon in most practical fashion as soon as possible.

[b] MAG Memberships with Motorcycle Sales at Dealerships etc.

Again this was noted as a Good Idea which the NC does intend to pursue; indeed moves toward this are already being followed up and contributions from the proposers shall be incorporated where possible.

Late Proposals put to Conference for VOTE.

[I] NC RECOMMENDATION - INCREASE BOARD OF MAG [UK] Ltd FROM 3 TO 7 DIRECTORS.

This was explained in principle by the Chairman. The intention is to increase the spread of responsibility and provide more accountability and representation in the day to day running of the legal entity which the limited company provides for the Motorcycle Action Group.

At present the 3 Directors are - Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary.

It is proposed to add the following -

Vice Chair, Government Relations Officer, Public Relations Officer, Reps Liaison Officer, Chief Executive; Secretary assuming the more usual status of non-voting Company Secretary (which has been the case in practice anyway up to now).

Conference was asked to agree in principle to the increased number of Directors on the company Board, with the National Committee empowered to make precise legal arrangements as soon as practical upon consultation with our legal advisor Philip Shuker.

ACCEPTED BY LARGE MAJORITY, in principle as above.

[ii] RE-ELECTION OF PRESENT COMPANY DIRECTORS -

Director - National Treasurer, Julie Toms

Director - National Chairman, Neil Liversidge

Secretary - National Secretary, Neil Andrews

AGREED BY LARGE MAJORITY (no votes against recorded)

[iii] INCREASES IN MEMBERSHIP FEES

NC recommends to conference that the following be accepted as increases to take effect from January 1st 1999 -

Individual - up from £15 to £16

Joint - up from £21.50 to £24

It is also recommended that the "Family Membership" option be simplified as follows in order to avoid any penalty on smaller families (at present a minimum of £9 for up to 3 children applies) -

ADD £3 Per Child, to Individual or Joint rates as applicable.

(Similar changes also required to Life Membership rates (will, as now, equal 10 times Annual fee)

Brief discussion indicated majority support for these changes, the first rise for 5 years. MAG membership rate for individuals will be £1 cheaper than BMF but maintain the "one plus half" fee applied to Joint memberships, which will be £1 dearer than BMF, something that has never produced adverse reaction in the past.

Conference was asked that attention to exact wording where required in the Constitution, Standing Orders and Rules be undertaken at the discretion of the NC - AGREED.

The above rate rises then out to Vote -

AGREED BY LARGE MAJORITY - PASSED.

[iv] Deletion of INFORMATION OFFICER from listed posts due for election at AGC.

Proposed by incumbent post holder Phil Neale, on the basis that this post has been absorbed by the Government Relations Working Group and thus been largely rendered unnecessary, with most of the tasks covered by Craig Carey-Clinch as head of that W/G. He urged conference to accept this change from Elected to Appointed status not subject to AGC approval for common sense practical reasons.

AGREED BY LARGE MAJORITY - PASSED.

Nich Brown and Craig asked conference to note our thanks for Phil Neale's excellent efforts in the post; he is taking on Government relations work for MAG Cymru following the setting up moves for the new Welsh Assembly. APPLAUSE!

Prior to recess for refreshments, founder member (00002) Owen Kristiansen addressed the conference. His words about MAG's earliest days and his views on progress since those days, with particular emphasis on his very strong opposition to the Helmet law, met with some amusement and interest though reaction from the floor might be described as mixed.

He closed by stressing how impressed he was with the highly professional operation now displayed by MAG, with the plea that the founding principle, opposition to the hated compulsory helmet law be given proper priority.

CONSTITUTION DETAIL AMENDMENTS

Immediately after Owen concluded his speech, National Chairman Neil Liversidge asked conference to vote for the following detail points to be changed in the formal Constitution draft-

Constitution, Item 6, clause ii - (page 1)

Amend wording to - "Seven Directors of the Limited Company"

(Proposed by Neil Liversidge, Seconded by Craig Carey-Clinch)

AGREED BY LARGE MAJORITY - PASSED

Rules, Items 9 - 10 - 11 - 12

To incorporate new membership fee rates and amend the reference to payments to FEM. The subscription structure for the new FEMA is changed and the figures per member no longer apply and this must be reflected here.

(Proposed by Neil Liversidge, Seconded by George Carnegie)

AGREED BY LARGE MAJORITY - PASSED

INTERVAL - 1.50pm TO 3.15pm

[9] PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dennis Howard rose to speak, applauded by the conference as he rose following introduction by Nich Brown (Conference Chair).

He thanked everyone for attending, and stressed his gratitude for the immense achievements over the years which he could only have dreamed of in the founding days of MAG !

He entertained with his customary mildly self-deprecatory humour, often a treat after intense debates at AGC. He apologised for his absence last year, which had it seems been due to having been knocked off his pushbike by a lady driver in Regents Park a "sorry I didn't see you" incident - possibly a bungled assassination attempt (!!).

He mentioned that he sometimes felt that he was rather past his "Sell By" date - but had been advised in conversation in the recess that this was an unkind term, and that noting instead that the "Best Before" date had passed by was more appropriate

He closed by again thanking everyone for the huge amounts of hard work put in on behalf of MAG and motorcycling generally.

WARMLY APPLAUDED.

AWARDS - INTRODUCED BY NICH BROWN, Conference Chair.

[10] FREEDOM AWARD

Nominated for the prestigious Freedom Award this year is EDDIE LOWE, West Midlands Regional Rep. The nomination is explained in the sheet accompanying these minutes. Eddie has given unstintingly of his efforts for no reward and with frequent and substantial personal sacrifice, for many years, for Local and Regional work, and also for National help (AGC facilities and catering for several years amongst other tasks).

AWARD PRESENTED BY DENNIS HOWARD.

Eddie spoke very briefly to thanks everyone for the presentation, and then asked his wife, MARGARET, to come up on stage. He then presented her with a big bunch of flowers to show his (and the region's" appreciation of her efforts helping - especially the great food!

[11] RICHARD TEGG AWARD, and STEVE TANNOCK TEAMWORK AWARD

[a] RICHARD TEGG AWARD

Aimed very much to recognise and reward the efforts of our many "unsung heroes" who unselfishly provide so much support in usually low profile local volunteer work.

Unusually, this year 2 nominations have been submitted. It is the view of the NC that both be accepted and that all receive the award on an equal merit basis. This was accepted by all present.

Nominated are DAVID WRIGHT (“Leftie”), for sustained efforts in the Black Country area of the West Midlands, and DAVE & DEBBIE TARBOX for their outstanding efforts over the past couple of years in the North Wales region.

ALL CALLED UP TO RECEIVE THEIR AWARDS - PRESENTED BY DENNIS HOWARD.

[b] STEVE TANNOCK TEAM WORK AWARD

Nominated this year were the volunteers from MAG Cymru who provided a great deal of excellent volunteer team effort at the MEGASHOW to the benefit of everyone. They include a number of members of Affiliated Club Saddletramps MCC.

REPRESENTATIVES of the many concerned CALLED UP TO RECEIVE THE AWARD, PRESENTED BY DENNIS HOWARD.

[12] HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Recommended to conference was former Public Relations / Communications officer, ALLEN BURTON, in recognition of the great contribution he made to MAG’s forward progress and improvement - particularly in the field of Media and Trade credibility for the Group.

Allen was unfortunately not able to be present, but the award of Honorary Life Membership was approved by Unanimous Vote and our thanks are to be suitably conveyed to him as soon as possible!

ALL AWARD WINNERS GIVEN WARM APPLAUSE!

[13] PRESENTATION OF DONATIONS

In introducing this popular item, Nich Brown stressed that we dearly appreciate the efforts of all organisers responsible for raising the high level of donations noted at each AGC - and that the aim of seeking a “National Agent” in order to increase our effective promotion and income was crucial to forward progress. We have appointed a new Chief Executive as part of this planning, the next phase should be attention to promotion and income generation.

Donations then presented -

First on stage was Jeremy Dodington from ANDOVER MAG, who spoke briefly to say that a local couple’s young son had sadly passed away recently. They had approached his group to say how much they appreciated the work MAG did for motorcycling, and that they wanted to make a small gesture by donating their little boy’s savings to MAG. Here then was a cheque for £4.75, BEING THE BALANCE OF HIS ACCOUNT at his untimely death. The amount might be small, but the gesture itself shows the great regard MAG is held in by many people and is very touching.

Donations raised from local and regional fund raising events and efforts then taken -
LEEDS MAG £200
WEST MIDLANDS MAG £250

HASTINGS MAG £300
MID LINCS MAG £1,000
RIPON MAG £2,000
YORKSHIRE MAG (Farmyard Party) £5,000 - more to follow in due course
NORTH EAST MAG (Stormin The Castle & local events) approx £20 - £25,000 total expected.

ALL DONATIONS RECEIVED VERY GALDY, MUCH APPLAUSE AND APPRECIATION SHOWN BY ALL PRESENT.

Each of the regional or local representatives who presented donations made special mention of their very grateful thanks for the wonderful help given by their volunteers in raising the funds.

[14] DATE, TIME & PLACE OF AGC 1999.

Due to current negotiations, it is not possible to confirm exact date for next year's AGC. It was asked that conference this year note that AGC 1999 shall be at this same venue, Scarborough Spa Conference Complex, in September. The day will of course be a Saturday. Exact date and detail arrangements to be advised as soon as possible.

AGREED - SEPTEMBER, (a Saturday), at SCARBOROUGH SPA.

[15] CLOSING ADDRESS BY NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

Neil Liversidge gave a brief and very much up-beat closing speech, thanking all the paid and unpaid workers who have helped the Group to survive and progress during the last year. A special brief mention for Jane Lambert and the Yorkshire volunteers who have put so much effort into making the actual set up and operation of this year's Conference so smooth.

This was starting his 10th year as Chairman, and his 18th year as a biker, with many fond memories of biking life to cherish along the way. Some notable earlier inspirations to him had been Dave Ramsden, a former Yorkshire regional rep who had given up paid work to survive on nominal income working for MAG in the region, and Norman Hartley from the North East, another former regional rep who had contributed enormous effort. Ricky Carr, former West Mids rep had also inspired with heroic lobbying efforts on a personal basis as well as organising team efforts in his region.

These are just a few of the many outstanding dedicated characters he remembered the list could go on and on.

He commended everyone present for making some good and brave decisions today.
THANK YOU ALL!

PROCEEDINGS BROUGHT TO A CLOSE BY NICH BROWN AT 4.00pm.