

Minutes of MAG ANNUAL GROUP CONFERENCE 1999
Held Saturday 18th September 1999, Scarborough Spa Centre

1 National Chairman Neil F Liversidge called Conference to order.

2 NFL welcomed delegates and handed over to Conference Chair Nich Brown.

3 Conference Chair introduced Henry Marks, MAG Chief Executive to his first AGC.

Henry Marks suggested that MAG needs a higher profile and as there were an estimated 1.4 million motorcyclists in the UK the present membership of approximately 19,000 still only represented a small proportion of them MAG needs to be run as a business in order to obtain the funding to support the political campaign. HM described the measures he had taken since his taking up office. These include new promotional literature which had vastly increased the take-up to over 20,000 in two months, a same-day service for the processing of new memberships, a new membership pack, sponsorship of new stationery, new motor, travel and general household insurance schemes, ferry discounts, and the Amba Rescue deal. Additional income had also been generated by the corporate membership scheme with companies such as BMW, Kawasaki, Suzuki and Aprilia joining the scheme. Henry urged members to support the companies who are supporting MAG, for example by replying to advertisements in StreetBiker. He went on to explain that the people whom we need to attract need to see a financial benefit from their membership as the majority of them will not be politically motivated, hence the need for the schemes described above.

4 Questions to the National Committee

Ian ????? Leamington – what prompted the new MAG logo?

NFL Assured members that there were no plans to drop the old 'pipes' logo but that it was somewhat dated and it was felt that the new logo would indicate to prospective members that the organisation was moving with the times and not stuck in the 1970's.

Ian Phillips, Cheshire – to HM 'Are you working to improve the financial running of individual regions?'

HM the current aim was to get MAG UK on a sound financial footing in order to assist local groups but he and NFL had offered to visit and advise regional groups.

Pete Walker, E Yorks. 'What steps have been taken to cut down on expenses and turn around membership applications more quickly?'

HM – explained that it had been necessary to find new premises for Central Office and that the new offices needed to have room for expansion, that improvements to the premises were being carried out at the owner's expense, that new employees had relevant experience (therefore improvement in service could be achieved), that the bank account contained three times the amount it contained on his appointment and that new software and hardware had speeded up the processing of membership applications.

Kenny Curton, E Yorkshire expressed concern over the influence of corporate members on MAG policy and the possibility of conflicts of interest e.g. on the issue of leg protectors.

NFL explained that are permitted to put their point of view but do not get a seat on the board or have any direct influence on MAG policy. On the issue of leg protectors he explained that the industry was against their use and because MAG was the only organisation fighting the issue gave MAG a video tape demonstrating that they were unsafe – contradicting research carried out by the TRL – the industry was also against the introduction of leg protectors on commercial grounds as they would increase by £500 the cost of a machine whilst simultaneously reducing the attractiveness of the product – all at a time when sales were at an all time low. HM explained that we have to talk to the industry but that they do not have any rights or any sway with MAG.

Mike Roberts, Reading drew the attention of the meeting to a problem with renewal of memberships with standing orders.

HM explained that there was a problem with standing orders as many of these were for the old rates and

that all members in this situation were being written to in order to correct the situation.

Melanie DeRaven S Oxon to Ian Much - were there any plans to make StreetBiker interesting? IM – defended his position stating that there was a need to include more general interest material in the paper as the ‘average biker’ is not interested in the political articles. It was also commented that the advertising was too spread out and not grouped into categories. IM stated that advertisers preferred the adverts to be spread throughout the publication but that he would consider the issue of grouping them by category. It was further commented that the A4 magazine format was preferable to the current tabloid. IM replied to this by stating that the production costs of the magazine format were too great. HM conclude the discussion by stating that a large number of business people – often people with no interest in motorcycling enjoyed reading the newspaper.

Jeff Mills W region membership secretary complained about the current state of membership records and how this was making his job more difficult.

HM replied by stating that there were over 100,000 names currently on the list, 5000 of which had no postcodes. Although a custom written database package had been purchased the problem lay in the records themselves, which had been transferred from the old system. This problem was being addressed firstly by removing details from the database when copies of StreetBiker were returned undeliverable (this did not happen previously) and secondly by a new system of reminding members to renew their subscriptions i.e. members will be written to one week before their membership is due for renewal – if not responded to a reminder will be sent out after 3 weeks if no response to this the details will be removed from the database.

5 Presentation of accounts by National Finance Director, Julie Stephenson and questions thereon.

Julie went through the report highlighting the following items

ACC fare pool fund will chase groups for payment.

Fighting fund has been a major disappointment

MBNA were not paying us the correct fees HM has corrected this.

MAG Products have been taken over by NE MAG

New hardware is to be purchased in order that all regional Reps will be accessible by Email

FEMA membership fee has now been tied to the value of the Euro.

An improved MAG stand is to be provided for the NEC.

A tax bill for unpaid tax by casual staff who cannot be traced has had to be paid MAG no longer employ casual staff.

Activist training was funded by “Into The Valley, E Yorkshire”

Questions

Ken Fleming of NW Region asked for a projection of membership

JS replied that we could be looking at a membership in the 100,000 range owing to the Amba Rescue deal.

Ian Wild – Leamington “What is current bank balance’

JS £50,000 in credit. NFL commented that we need more fundraising for MAG as opposed to charities.

Ian Phillips asked why membership income had dropped if membership had risen. JS – because accounts were only up to 31st July.

Nic McVee asked about the lack of publicity for the raffle.

HM replied that there would be no raffle this year for two reasons – firstly we were acting illegally by giving tickets away as well as selling them, secondly it was likely that the event would be taken over by another organisation.

George Carnegie asked to see the balance sheet that goes to Companies House

JS said that this would be made available.

Johnny Morrison E Yorks asked if there was any intention to purchase more marquees

HM commented that the 2 present ones were not generating sufficient income – problem with costs of transportation.

Geoff Eborall – asked if event organisers were submitting accounts within 6 weeks

JS replied that they were not and that she didn't have time to chase them up.

6. Advance proposal 1 to adopt the new draft constitution.

NFL explained the need for changes to as set out in Conference Pack A

Comments from the floor were initially centred around the consultation process e.g. Paul Lockingham asked whether there was ever a draft constitution with changes highlighted circulated, NFL stated that the draft was on the website and had been published in Network,

Graham Hughes???? N. Yorks commented that not everyone had access to those sources, and that the draft should be seen by every member – NFL said that it would be impractical to circulate copies to every member and that the NC had done its best to make the membership aware of the proposed changes.

Liz Newton S. Hants commented that the draft differed from the one presented today Nich Brown explained that the changes were a result of the consultation process.

Other comments were –

CI 5 ix re the stipulation that nominations for National Officers need to have been members for at least 12 months – this was a protection against some hostile group signing up as members then nominating their own people for NC positions.

CI 8 xiii “no company formed by a local group shall use the initials MAG in its name.” The position of MAG NE was discussed it was after some debate to insert the word “henceforth” at the beginning of the sentence.

CI 4 xv Nic McVee reference to Nov 31st to be amended to Nov 30th Also re CI 8 petition signed by not less than 25 members – suggested that these members should be from at least two local groups (in order to deal with a situation where one local group had a grievance against the regional rep – it was pointed out that some regions consist of only one group – agreed to amend this to read “where more than group exists.”

CI 2 xv re fees set by NC should AGC not have facility to set fees to This JS commented that there had been an instance where had been forgotten to include club affiliation fees in changes – therefore NC needed to be able to rectify such mistakes.

CI 5 iii Mike Roberts Reading asked if advance proposals could also be published in the August/September issue of the group's newspaper – NFL commented that they would be pleased to do so if such proposals were received on time – but this tended not to be the case.

Vote on the new constitution overwhelmingly in favour – only one against

7 Elections – A National Officers and B Directors of MAG (UK) Ltd elected unopposed. (1 vote against election of Directors)

C Drawing of lots to decide length of first term served by Directors

NFL 3 years, JS 2, HM 1, IM 3, MW, 4, PN 1, NB 2

8 Advance proposals 2 & 3 from Bristol MAG

2 re postal ballot - Peter Edan spoke in favour of the motion, as all members should have the right to vote regardless of whether or not they were able to attend Conference. – NFL spoke against the motion for the reasons set out in conference pack B adding that a postal ballot would kill the Conference, Ian Much supported the NC's views, Paul Lochlan suggested live voting via the Web, Ozzy suggested a means whereby non attendees could have an opportunity of voicing their opinion but not having voting rights.

Voting – 4 in favour overwhelmingly against

3 Organisation and location of Conference - Peter Edan spoke for the proposal that the NC be required to advise regions on the organisation of the AGC and to establish a central fund for the purpose. NFL spoke against the proposal on the grounds that the NC had sufficient to do and that Yorkshire had done the great service by taking the AGC off their hands – but that the NC were not against the AGC moving and that the NC had invited other regions to submit proposals but none had done so – however in practice only two regions i.e. Yorks and NE had the resources to finance the event. It was asked from the floor how much the event cost to put on - £6-7K, Ozzy asked why this couldn't be put into a central fund – Geoff Eboral agreed that this would be possible as the money would otherwise go into the fighting fund.

Voting – 26 in favour –

9 Late proposals –

Nic McVee re Cl8 viii – already covered above.

Jeff Mills – N Somerset Speed Policy Review “This Conference notes with concern the idea of a national 50mph speed limit on single carriageway roads”

(Conference adjourned for lunch at this point)

This item generated a substantial debate points made included

Phil Neale – need for local solutions to local problems

H Marks – local speed limits often politically motivated

Ian Moore – speed limits so widely disregarded – become ineffectual some slow speed limits cause accidents

Johnny Morrison – need for appropriate speed limits

NFL spoke in favour of the proposal

Vote carried.

10 Johnny Morrison – proposed MAG take a stance against the fuel tax escalator – there was some debate as to what effect this as on reducing car use and what other means could be used which would not adversely affect motorcyclists e.g. Ozzy said that road pricing was on its way and MAG should be arguing now for motorcycles to be exempt, NFL suggested that car parks should be demolished and public transport improved, Ian Philips suggested that petrol was a ‘price inelastic’ commodity i.e. that people would pay whatever it cost – reducing on the purchase of other commodities if necessary, George Carnegie suggested the alternative proposal “That MAG take a more active stance on fuel tax increases” Carried.

11 President's address – Denis Howard

12 Awards

Lifetime Achievement Len Vale Onslow –

Honorary Life Membership

1 Liam Gallagher

2 Mark Rutherford (Ozzy)

3 Craig Carey Clinch

4 Bill Wilson

5 Debbie Jones

6 Nikki Walker

Steve Tannich Award – NE MAG

Richard Tegg Award – Pete Walker

Chairman's Award - Northern Ireland MAG

Freedom Award - NFL

10 AOB. Debbie – continuation of free affiliation for NABD - carried

Tom W – S, Hants – spoke of Ruth who had been killed in RTA - unable to give details as sub judice
appeal for private prosecution of driver if necessary

Next AGC Sat 17th September 2000 Venue TBA