

Minutes

of the

Motorcycle Action Group

Annual Group Conference

April 04, 2009

1. Opening of AGC by National Chairman: *Jane Chisholm*

Jane thanked the membership for their solidarity over the past year, those in attendance for their support of AGC, Jane Carrott for taking the minutes for the third year and North-East MAG (with particular reference to Darlington branch) for hosting this year's conference. The National Committee were introduced.

2. Formal introduction of National Vice Chairman, handover of Chair: *Jane Chisholm*

Jane introduced the National Vice Chairman, Fergus O'Connell, and handed over running of the proceedings to him.

3. Adjourn AGC, open MAG UK AGM: *Fergus O'Connell*

AGC was adjourned, and MAG UK AGM opened.

1. Reports

Report by Chairman of the Board: *Jane Chisholm*

Jane reported that several contracts had been sorted out and confirmed the current Board membership.

Company Secretary report: *Steve Wykes*

Steve confirmed MAG UK is solvent and operating legally.

Finance Director's report: *Justine Travis* (see also attached)

Justine reminded Conference that MAG's financial year runs from August 1st to July 31st. As at last year's AGC, she stated that the majority of MAG's funds come from membership subscriptions and the fighting fund, and noted that membership has remained static and that the fighting fund had been hard hit by last summer's poor weather affecting the premier MAG events.

She then noted that a great deal of MAG's annual income comes during the last quarter of its financial year and showed graphs depicting the income for the last three years; she also noted that around 75% of MAG's fighting fund is income generated at its premier events in Yorkshire and the North East.

Justine then presented a breakdown on the last financial year. She noted that there had been major staffing changes, which had led to increased costs for temporary cover and two Activist Training weekends. She also noted that, where possible, budgets had been reduced and that this current financial year could be expected to be a difficult one due to the tough economic climate. She then took questions from the floor.

Andy Carrott (Mid Lincs) asked if quotes were periodically obtained regarding production costs for The Road. It was confirmed that this is done and that Ian Mutch (Editor) absorbs some of the costs.

Julie Stephenson asked what plans have been put in place to prevent further financial difficulties. Justine responded that

the number of staff has been reduced, the ticket line has been brought in house and that the budgets for the relaunch would not apply to this year's figures. She also noted that it was looking as though MAG would break even this year.

Neil Stephenson noted that there is a financial meeting prior to National Committee meetings asked when the Board became aware that it was likely that MAG would make a loss, to which the reply was "two months ago".

A delegate (name not given) asked if a loss had been predicted, why no action was taken. Justine responded that a great deal of MAG's income comes in from MAP in November and from Stormin' in April. It was therefore following this that the figures were known.

A delegate (name not noted) stated that if it were not for the premier events the figures would be even worse, and noted that a further 700 members would take up the shortfall. Justine concurred that membership needs to grow.

Julie Stephenson asked whether membership subscriptions need to be increased. Justine stated that it was hoped that new memberships would increase following the rebrand but that costs probably do need to be increased. Fergus noted that it can be difficult to recruit at the current cost of £20.00!!

In response to a question regarding the cost of the relaunch the figure of £14,000 was noted.

In response to a question regarding effective recruitment Ian Mutch noted that the most effective methods are work done by local groups, face-to-face, and by the National Clubs Officer liaising with clubs, and stated that this provides a better return than advertising, giving the example of 300-400 recruitments at the NEC Bike Show. (Neil Stephenson interjected that the figure was around 110, prompting Ian to say that like Boris (Johnson, Mayor of London) he is "not good on detail"!)

In response to a question regarding what is available to take out to people in the way of resources, Ian summarised the available resources.

Neil Stephenson noted that membership has retained a steady figure of around 10,000 over the past four years and that these figures do not significantly change no matter what size of display stand is used and that new memberships only counteract those that lapse.

Andy Carrott asked whether MAG is going to "bite the bullet" and consider an increase in subscriptions. Jane Chisholm responded that although the floor could not vote on this matter they could advise the board and asked conference if they wished this matter to be discussed to which conference responded "yes".

Roger Musgrove stated that his club had had a presentation by MAG regarding affiliation and that the club had decided to stick with the BMF, the sticking point being public liability insurance costs. Nich Brown responded that the reason clubs want PLI is to cover them in the event of being sued and that MAG does not operate an automatic cover as part of the affiliation deal. He

also noted that MAG's PLI is provided by the same underwriters as that of the BMF, but that the BMF don't offer the option of being affiliated without PLI, and that because it is bigger with more large clubs it can negotiate better deals on costs.

In closing, Justine noted that by AGC 2010 she will have been in post for six years and gave notice of her intention to stand down as Treasurer at that time.

2. Reappointment of Auditors

Prior to voting, discussion ensued regarding increased costs for this service, for which the relevant information was provided. Included in the figure is insurance against Government auditing, which would be a huge expense for MAG if chosen.

Stanley Yule were reappointed as Auditors.

Proposed: Justine Travis, Seconded: Steve Wykes. **Carried**

3. Resignation and election of Directors

Resignations: Gerard Livett

Elections: (Manifestos attached).

The following members were elected as Directors, following a brief commendation by their respective proposers.

Paul Turner - Proposed: Bill Pugsley, Seconded Greg Phillipson.

Carried

Diane Pugsley - Proposed: Sheila McMahon, Seconded Ian Mutch.

Carried

Justine Travis - Proposed: Jez Doddington, Seconded Steve Wykes.

Carried

Neil Stevenson sought clarification on how many Directors MAG currently has. Jane Chisholm responded that six out of the seven positions are currently filled and noted the tenures for each.

4. Summing up: Jane Chisholm

In summing up, Jane noted that it has been a difficult year financially and that there would be discussion further on in the Conference about future strategies.

5. Close of AGM: Fergus O'Connell

MAG UK AGM was duly closed and AGC reopened.

4. MAG Foundation report: Nich Brown

Nich opened by clarifying that the work of the MAG Foundation is deemed in the public interest and therefore charitable status applies, which lends weight to the work carried out. Also, in practical terms, money goes further due to tax rebates. All staff are voluntary.

He thanked the organisers of the Ganton Gathering, now a regular event, for raising funds for the Foundation.

Representatives have been sent to a number of key road safety conferences and as motorcycles are often not on their agenda or there is bias against them, these have proved a useful and practical platform for us.

Wend Coy (Mid Lincs) asked who the current trustees are. They are Nich Brown, Andy ??? [plus two others, names not caught].

In response to a question from Rick Hulse regarding publicising our efforts and achievements, Nich noted that it is a "chicken and egg" situation as this takes up time needed for doing the work. Rick further noted that information can be turned into advertising.

5. National Officers Reports

National Chairman: Jane Chisholm

Jane opened her comments by noting the changes in personnel at Central and how this had created an opportunity to review and revise roles and job descriptions. She thanked Janet who finally, after years of service, got fed up of commuting from Birmingham every day(!) and noted that there is now a very capable team on board, and that improvements include bringing on-line ticket sales in-house.

She went on to describe how, following David Short's resignation as Campaigns Officer, more of the administrative work has been brought under the remit of the administrative staff. She also noted that during this time, volunteer support has been exceptional.

Following poor weather during last summer, income from events is down and Jane said this highlighted the need for more detailed information needs to be coming through regarding events throughout the year to enable a clearer financial picture and improved forward planning. She gave sincere thanks to all who had contributed financially during this difficult year, and to Back Street Heroes and 100% Biker for their support, not just during events but with pre-event publicity.

Following problems with the website, including the host company going bust, operation and maintenance has now been brought fully in-house.

Jane then noted that Nich Brown had taken over from David Short, the MotoKL project is now in its fifth year and running two teams, overall MAG membership has been sustained at approximately 10,000, we have record numbers of clubs affiliated, and Gerard Livett is now President of FEMA. She extended her good wishes to him and closed by thanking MAG members throughout all levels of MAG for their support.

In response to a question from Julie Stephenson regarding donations from events, and the possibility of donations being made more proactively as soon as the money is available, Jane noted that this issue will be addressed with some new strategies.

Robin (Straughn???) sought clarification regarding Network being produced by Anne Gale, i.e. was Anne taking the role of National Communications Officer. Jane noted that Anne's input was purely on a voluntary basis to collate and produce Network.

Campaigns Manager and General Secretary: Nich Brown

Nich opened his comments by noting that he had now been post for ten months and had been struck by how little of the work carried out at Central directly related to campaigns. He has now surveyed the work done and in looking for new staff had looked for the right people to build an effective team, and that can overlap roles so that cover is available for holidays, etc. He also noted that some salaries have decreased and others increased to reflect their skills and value for money.

He stated that three essential functions have been addressed: the accounts have updated to current practises, which also makes the Auditors role easier; the membership database needs overhauling and having looked at the costs of installing a new one, which could be as much as £20k, reconfiguring of the existing one is now being considered; improvements have been made to the website and email facilities and this will be rolled out to Regional and local levels.

Nich then went on to say that there will be some changes; for example Central's five-year lease will be up for renewal in May 2010, which may afford the opportunity to reduce costs by moving or subletting. He said that a "spring clean" is needed as valuable space is being taken up by things not necessarily in use or required.

A delegate asked if the database can include people's skills and Nich responded that although this is something he would like, the current database doesn't keep historical data thereby making it difficult to build a picture of "who we are".

A delegate noted that retention of members is an issue that needs improving and was advised that there are plans under consideration to use local contact where appropriate, including the possibility of telephone contact.

Nich then moved on to campaigns. He noted that David Short was very good at representing the organisation to people outside motorcycling but less so with communication within MAG, and that we need to work at getting the balance right with an improved flow of information through MAG, both top down and bottom up. He said that when David left he advised that rather than rush into replacing him, MAG should review the role first to ensure that we get the right person doing what is needed to be done. He noted that MAGs position statements have not be updated since 2001 and said that these need to be updated first before reappointing. In the meantime he is covering campaigns work one day a week in the short term.

He went on to note a number of issues that are currently of concern, including Test Centres (demo forthcoming); airbag jackets (there is no way of testing them effectively); events cancellations (for discussion later); concerns over the type approval multi-directive; also several issues that have been fought in the past but are now coming round again, e.g. 100 bhp limits, anti-tampering. Nich said that if we are going to tackle more issues we need to know is wanted to become more effective. He stated that we need to rely less on Network as a monthly publication and more on email alerts, retaining Network as a live document on the website.

He closed by noting that time, experience, skills and energy are required to keep MAG effective.

Clubs Liaison: Fergus O'Connell

Fergus reported that MAG currently has 166 clubs affiliated, equating to around 146,000 affiliate members in all. Affiliations are up by 44% following MAG's rebranding. He also noted that several of the large one-make clubs have come on board that, until recently, would not have done so.

He also noted successful liaison between N.E. Lincs MAG and the DSA regarding Grimsby's test centre.

The Road: Ian Mutch

Ian said that he hoped that proofing of The Road had improved and that there will be further developments regarding the design and pictorial elements of the magazine. He noted that there is currently not much commercial income from advertising as it is difficult to sell in the current difficult economic climate. He then managed to link advertising income to supermarket shopping (!) and noted that quotes are obtained periodically but that the current company is very good and MAG has been using them for some time. He then informed conference that his laptop is now "wrecked due to extensive foreign travel", said that picture quality has improved and that the copy deadlines need to be borne in mind when submitting material and that regarding the My Bike feature "keep 'em coming".

Conference breaks for lunch

6. Election of National Officers (Manifestos attached)

National Chairman: Paul Turner

Proposed: Fergus O'Connell, Seconded: Greg Phillipson.

Paul stated that as a recently retired police officer he has the time available to commit to the post of Chair, and stated that he would "give it a go".

Ian Churchlow asked him what he perceived as his main priorities, and Paul stated these would be freedom of choice, increasing the membership, setting up a working group to look at finances, and forward planning.

Carried

National Finance Officer: Justine Travis

Proposed: Tony Cox, Seconded: Steve Wykes.

Carried

National Clubs Officer: Fergus O'Connell

Proposed: Rory Wilson, Seconded: Ian Mutch.

Carried (4 abstentions)

7. MAG Position Statements: Sheila McMahon

During the lunch break, delegates were asked to choose their top five position statements from a list, for discussion in conference. Sheila thanked delegates for their responses, with particular reference to the member who had not only corrected spelling on the form, but "asked the pertinent question: what do these lists actually mean?", which highlighted the fact that the position statements really do need to be revised and made available for all members to access.

She then noted that the overall top five were: diesel spills, power limits, road pricing, bus lanes and anti-tampering laws. These will take priority in the overhaul of position statements.

8. Motions to Conference (see attached)

Motion 1:

Nich Brown noted that in this proposal "...free affiliation for NABD" should read "... for Youthbike" and gave Rick Hulse an opportunity to speak. Rick summed up saying that NABD had had another fantastic year and hit "a ¼ million turnover - not bad for a bunch of raggy-arsed bikers". He noted that administration costs are kept to a minimum and that all proceeds are used for adaptations. He stated that they are currently looking at the new test system and how it may affect disabled riders and are consulting with the DSA for adjustments that won't disbar disabled riders, and at dispensation for power:weight ratios for trikes and sidecars.

Conference then voted on the motion to offer free affiliation to Youthbike

Motion carried

Motion 2:

Andy Gledhill spoke in favour of the motion to reduce the size of the Eastern Region and offered the following reasons: size of the region (it stretches from the Humber to the M25); it is too much for one Regional Representative to reasonably take on; the bulk of the region's active members are concentrated in a relatively small area of the region; a change would be an opportunity to give identity to the region.

Julie Stephenson said that while appreciating that the Eastern region is large, there are other regions that are also large.

Sal Gledhill stated that MAG needs to take into account the fact that the ceremonial county of Lincolnshire alone covers over 9,000 sq km, North/South transport links are poor with only 66 km of dual carriageway throughout the county.

It was also noted that the region struggles to get and then keep a Regional representative for any length of time, due to the vast amount of travelling required to keep in touch with branches and affiliated clubs.

Steve Wykes said that he saw no problem in principal but that if the region was split it could change voting rights and suggested a system of county reps taking it in turns.

Andy Carrott underlined that there is the issue of having a regional identity, citing examples of other regions with strong identities, further noting that this matter had been discussed and voted on at Eastern Region's AGM. He further noted that a branch in the south of the county had already voluntarily affiliated themselves to a region closer to them.

Neil Stephenson asked if there was anyone prepared to take on the post and Wend Coy responded that the region does not have the infrastructure as it stands to be able to tempt anyone into the position.

A vote was taken with the following result:

For: 29 Against: 27 Abstentions: 20

Nich Brown stated that although the motion passed by a slim majority, a change to the Constitution required a 2/3 majority and requested that conference voted a second time. Julie Stephenson urged a vote in favour so that the democratic process could be moved forward.

A second vote was taken with the following result:

For: 42 Against: 28 Abstentions: 6

Motion falls under the 2/3 majority rule.

However, Nich stated that there may be a solution and explained that it is within the power of the National Committee to decide on regional boundaries and that they would revisit the boundaries issue with a view to changes in the spirit of the proposal, even though the motion technically fell.

Motion 3:

This motion regarding roads policing was put forward after the December 31st deadline in light of recent event cancellations and a statement was read to conference on behalf of the Welsh Show organisers. They then noted concerns regarding future events and that there is a potential for this type of action to spread and cause further problems. They also said that this has had a knock-on effect on the roads and that there appears to be anecdotal evidence of attempts at entrapment. They also noted that cameras in Derbyshire can recognise and track individuals.

Sal Gledhill asked what they thought MAG should do. Jol (???) said it was an issue that needed to be coordinated nationally and requested assistance from the National Committee, and said he felt that it could bring in more memberships.

Justine Travis stated that she had spoken and voted against the motion being brought to conference but having heard the arguments now felt differently about the matter.

Julie Stephenson noted that this was not an emergency motion and urged conference to reject the motion but commend it as a recommendation.

Jane Chisholm explained that it had been decided to accept the motion in light of information received after December 31st (the usual deadline for submissions).

Rick Hulse stated that this is an emergency as there is already a perceived lack of response on MAGs part regarding last year's events closures. He said that MAG must not be perceived as inactive again by bikings "general public", and quoted from Pastor Niermuller's (??) war poem I Did Nothing.

Wend Coy mentioned Operation Stealth in Lincolnshire and concurred that this is an emergency situation.

Sheila McMahon advised caution and stated that any action taken must be the right action.

Motion carried (1 against)

9. Presidents Address: Ian Mutch

Ian opened his address with an anecdote about his recent African trip, culminating in "You're never too old to be embarrassed!". He then mentioned Jane Chisholm's tenure as Chair, stating that she is passionate about MAG. He continued with further anecdotes about the sea, coffins, Napoleon, and someone he knows called "Corrugated Dave", managing to weave points about MAG into this rich tapestry.

He mentioned that last year's weather problems at premier events exposed the vulnerability of MAG's finances, and said that lessons can be learned from campaigns such as "Diesel Spills" and against parking charges, stating that relatively small organisations can make a big impact over individual issues using the full range of modern communication technology now available.

In closing, he said that MAG has reached a degree of sophistication and refinement, squeezed in a final, age-related, motorcycling anecdote and stated that if we "redouble our efforts and act smarter" we will succeed.

10. Awards

Richard Tegg Award:

Awarded to Brian Rodwell, the speaker noting that this was an important award for unsung heroes. It was noted that Brian really is a "grassroots" member - he cuts the grass, trims the hedges and brings the firewood for the Farmyard Party premier event - and that efforts to get him to the AGC had failed as he couldn't tell him the reason why he needed to be there!!

Steve Tannock Teamwork Award:

Awarded to Steve Wykes and Edinburgh MAG in recognition of work towards the setting up of FEMA and having arranged the inaugural meeting.

Honorary Life Membership:

Awarded to Andy [?surname?]. Nich Brown said he has known Andy for many years and that he "spends a great deal of time in a dark basement" with technical equipment. Accepted by Jeff from Western Region on Andy's behalf.

Certificate of Merit:

Awarded to Rory Wilson. Selina Lavender noted that Rory, newest recruit to the National Committee, has done a great deal of political work in Wales, including getting an Early Day Motion taken to parliament regarding the new driving test centres.

Certificate of Merit:

Awarded to Tony Cox. For his hard work that has led to MAG being introduced into a Region where there was no MAG presence.

Simon Milward Award (Lifetime Achievement Award):

Awarded to Ian Mutch. Jane said her comments would be "short and sweet, like the recipient" and noted that Ian has dedicated his life to the cause over the past 35 years.

The Chairman's Award:

Awarded to Middlesborough MAG and accepted on their behalf by John Hughes.

Media Award:

Awarded to Back Street Heroes. Pete Walker accepted the award on behalf of BSH, stating that they have been active supporters of MAG for several years now, including sponsorship of entertainment at premier MAG events and regular editorial space.

11. Presentation of Donations

Justine thanked all branches, regions and events for their support. Cheques were presented as follows:

by Sheila McMahon, on behalf of Yorkshire Region from four events: £12,000;

by Alison Ayrey, profits from the 4th Fun & Frolics rally: £3,000;

by Selina Lavender, from Bury St Edmunds branch: £4,000 and from a member unable to attend the event but who sent the ticket price anyway £10.00;

by Steve Wykes, on behalf of Edinburg MAG, £4,000.

Paul Turner, incoming Chairman, took the opportunity at this point to present Jane Chisholm, outgoing Chair, with a bouquet and thanked her for her hard work over the past three years in post.

12. National Chairman's closing address

Paul Turner, incoming chair stated "Thank you all for attending - Goodbye!" which got a round of applause!!

Jane Chisholm then summed up, noting among other things, that the possibility of an increase in membership fee needs to be explored, and Neil Stephenson stated that we need figures on the costs of "running" a member, The Road, administration, etc, including the costs of affiliation, before decisions are made. He requested that it be noted that Conference instructs the National Committee to consider and report on this matter. Another member spoke against an increase, but Andy Carrott (Mid Lincs) stated that we need to be prepared for such an increase in the future.

Jane closed by thanking Fergus O'Connell for chairing AGC and North East MAG for hosting the event.

Paul Turner then briefly noted that membership fees will be discussed, regional boundaries will be discussed and that support through membership is vital. He offered his encouragement to all, and closed by thanking Fergus O'Connell for chairing AGC.

13. AGC 2010

It was announced that AGC 2010 will take place on the second weekend in April.

Conference closes.

Minutes taken by Jane Carrott, 72474, Secretary Mid Lincs Branch.