

# British Parachute Association

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## COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on  
**TUESDAY 24 APRIL 2001 at 1500**  
at the BPA Offices, 5 Wharf Way, Glen Parva, Leicester

<b>Present:</b>	Kieran Brady Paul Applegate Lofty Thomas	-	Committee Chairman
<b>In attendance:</b>	Tony Butler Lesley Gale John Hitchen Martin Shuttleworth Lucie Wood Sue Waterfield	-	Technical Officer Editor, Skydive Magazine NCSO National Administrator Development Officer Administration Secretary
<b>Apologies for absence:</b>	Ian Midgley Craig Poxon		

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## ITEM MINUTE

### 05/01 Quorum

As there were only two voting Members plus the Chairman present, the Chairman checked the Committee's terms of reference to determine whether the meeting was quorate, and found it to be so. He then asked the two voting Members present, and Lesley Gale, whether they were content to continue with the meeting with two voting members present, and two absent. After discussion, it was unanimously agreed to proceed rather than attempt to reschedule the meeting, bearing in mind that there had already been two postponements of the previous meeting. Craig Poxon had helpfully sent an e-mail which summarised his view on a main item for discussion, secretarial assistance for the Magazine, and the Chairman was generally aware of Ian Midgley's view on this matter.

### 06/01 Minutes

Paul Applegate proposed, and Lofty Thomas seconded, a motion that the minutes of (i) the meeting held on Tuesday 12 December 2000 and (ii) the short meeting held on Tuesday 20 February 2001, be approved as a correct record.

**Approved**

### 07/01 Matters arising

#### 7.1 Inventory of BPA equipment used for Skydive Magazine (12 December, minute 2)

Lesley Gale had circulated a list of BPA assets (office equipment) used for the production of Skydive Magazine. The list contained 8 items with a combined purchase value of £1393.49. Two further items of equipment had been approved for purchase, and would be added to the list as and when they were procured. The first was a digital camera. The second was a

Portable Document Format (PDF) Writer, which could bring significant savings by eliminating the proof stage of production. However, this was a big step to take as presently – as was traditional with most magazines – some important corrections were often made at proof stage. To get the most out of new technology by successfully embracing PDF software therefore required changes to well established production procedures. In turn this depended on having sufficient secretarial assistance to be able to plan and implement such a change.

## **7.2 Responsibilities for areas of work within Skydive Magazine (12 December, minute 2)**

Lesley Gale tabled two sheets setting out the workflow for the production and distribution of Skydive Magazine, including a list of who did what together with budget allocations for the current financial year.

## **7.3 Starter magazine reprint (12 December, minute 3)**

Lesley Gale reported that, of the print run of 30,000 copies of Skydive Starter Magazine printed early last summer, about 18,000 had been distributed by the end of the calendar year 2000. The distribution was beginning to gear up again for the new season, as Clubs and Centres ordered more P6 and temporary memberships. The office had sent out a letter in February 2001 to ask for the continued support of DZ Operators in issuing the Starter Magazine, and the present distribution arrangements appeared generally to be satisfactory. It was likely that a reprint, with updates, would be necessary this year and the position would be reviewed at the next meeting in the light of how many copies of the first run were still in stock at that time.

**Action: BPA Office (Starter Mag distribution figures) / Next Meeting**

There had been no further development of a suggestion that an Internet Service Provider might propose an agreement with the BPA that would involve them distributing the Starter Magazine by post.

## **7.4 Communications Action Plan Matrix 2001/2 (20 February, minute 2)**

Further consideration of costs had indicated that the budget for the action plan target of continuing to develop and enhance the BPA and Skydive Magazine websites should be increased from £9K to £18.5K. This would include a more realistic contribution to the staff and telecomms costs associated with the project. Lofty Thomas proposed, and Paul Applegate seconded, a motion that this increase in budget allocation should be made.

**Carried**

## **08/01 Secretarial assistance for the Magazine**

Lesley Gale thanked the Committee for approving the use of temporary secretarial assistance for the Magazine at its last meeting. This had been very helpful as a short-term measure, but for the sake of continuity and future planning, it was important to put in place more permanent arrangements as soon as practicable.

With reference to the workflow documents she had tabled, Lesley Gale summarised the procedure producing of an issue of Skydive Magazine, and who was involved at each stage. She outlined each of the many stages including planning the issue, commissioning features, articles and other material, compilation, editing text and selecting photographs, checking, designing, scanning, producing a dummy copy, proofing, printing and distribution. As well as carrying out all of the editorial stages, the Editor was the overall co-ordinator of the whole production process and those involved with it, which included the many contributors, the designer, the advertising agent, and the printers and distributors.

Since Lesley Gale had become Editor, there had been an increase from 48 to 80 pages per issue. After setting extra pages of advertising to one side, this had involved an increase in workload of around one third on extra content. Part-time secretarial support had been itemised within the Magazine budget for the last four years, but further development of the Magazine meant that full-time assistance was now needed to free up more of Lesley Gale's time to concentrate on the more specialist editorial work rather than continuing to carrying out

some time-consuming secretarial duties herself. She also hoped to involve the proposed new full-time Secretary in actively procuring and developing material from the BPA's 28 Clubs for the Club News section, which was like a mini-magazine in itself.

The Magazine also acted as a resource centre for the BPA, dealing with many enquiries from Members and others relating to features, articles and news items it had run. Helping with such enquiries was not strictly a part of Magazine production, but was essential to maintain a good rapport with readers, contributors and advertisers – it was all part of the service readers expected any good magazine to provide.

The existing Magazine budget had recorded a surplus of £8K in the year ended 30 June 2000, and was expected to show a smaller surplus at the end of the current year, after allowing for the cost of full-time secretarial assistance. A full-time secretary could therefore be funded from within the existing budget, without calling on the BPA for any further funds. The overall employment costs would probably be around double the previous £6K per annum for part-time assistance.

The Chairman said that the engagement of a full-time secretary for the Magazine made it timely to think about the longer-term future of the Magazine. For example, should the secretary or indeed the whole Magazine office be based in Leicester, perhaps eventually as a self-contained unit that might be built on to the existing BPA Offices? This would bring the magazine in-house and might allow other services currently contracted out, such as advertising sales for the magazine, to be brought in-house too. He emphasised that such thoughts were at a very early stage, and there may be good reasons why such a proposal might need to be modified, or indeed perhaps might not work at all. But it was important to brainstorm the options in order to have confidence that the best arrangements were in place to allow the Magazine to continue to develop in the future. The Chairman asked all Members of the Committee, and Lesley Gale as Editor, to consider these issues for discussion at the next meeting when it was hoped that all Members of the Committee would be present.

**Action: Next Meeting**

Lesley Gale was not herself an employee of the BPA. Rather, she was a self-employed Editor who held a commercial contract to produce Skydive Magazine, receiving a fee per issue (which had not increased since August 1998) out of which she had to meet costs such as rental of an office. It might therefore be that the best arrangement for the engagement of a new full-time secretary for the Magazine would be for Lesley Gale to be the employer, and this would need to be discussed with Chris Allen before the particulars of employment were settled.

For the present, Lesley Gale indicated that her main priority had to be to secure adequate secretarial support for Magazine production with the existing arrangements and location.

Therefore, Lofty Thomas proposed, and Paul Applegate seconded, a motion that Lesley Gale should be authorised to engage a full-time secretary for Skydive Magazine, the cost of which would be met in full from the existing Magazine budget (with no increase in funds from the BPA), the employment relationship to be discussed with Chris Allen [in view of Lesley Gale's self-employed status]. Craig Poxon had sent a proxy vote in favour of any proposal for full-time assistance for the Magazine Editor.

**Carried**

#### **09/01 Magazine advertising sales**

Lofty Thomas said that only one advertisement in the latest issue of the Magazine had been placed by an advertiser outside parachuting. He therefore questioned why the advertising sales for the Magazine needed to be contracted out to Warners, an external advertising sales agency, who charged a commission of 30%.

Lesley Gale tabled figures showing the Magazine advertising revenue per year for the last five years. This showed a significant increase in revenue from Magazine advertising to the BPA

during each of the two years that Warners had held the agency contract. This increase had enabled more pages to be added to the Magazine without calling on the Members for an increase in their Magazine subscription. Warners had already succeeded in attracting more American advertisers, and there was now the potential for a sales plan to develop more non-core advertisers, about which she had already held discussions with Warners. Warners had the expertise to do this as they were professionals in selling advertising, acting in this capacity for more than 50 specialist titles.

Although saving the cost of using an advertising sales agency might at first sight appear to be attractive, Lesley Gale believed that it would be a false economy because it was a specialist area that as Editor, even with a full-time Secretary, she would not have the time, resources and facilities to look after to anything like the level of expertise that the team of specialists at Warners could offer. What she did do was to work very closely with Warners in developing and targeting a strategy for advertisers, including pricing, leaving Warners to do the selling. She believed that the increase in advertising sales that this had already generated spoke for itself. It would always be the case that some advertisements would come in by themselves, but these were more than offset by others that required hard work and careful strategies such as series discounts to attract. Professional selling of advertising space required a professional agency, which was exactly the service by which Warners had achieved such a good track record to date. That said, Lesley Gale said she was by no means complacent and had been pressing Warners to bring in more external, non-core advertisers. If this did not happen, there was the possibility of looking elsewhere for such a service.

The Chairman thanked Lesley Gale for this explanation, and asked her to keep the arrangements for advertising sales in the Magazine under review, and to consider them as part of the 'big picture' for the future of the Magazine (minute 8).

**Action: Ongoing**

**10/01 Websites**

Lucie Wood reported that both the BPA and Skydive Magazine websites had successfully been transferred to a new host (Easyspace). A new website design firm, ZCT, had been engaged to assist in the further development of the sites. Already the link to the safety pages had been replaced by a new safety section integral to the BPA site. As the website design firm was based in Leicester, this should make regular contact with them easier, and a meeting was planned for next week to discuss the future development of both sites. ZCT would provide training to enable more routine updating and maintenance to be carried out from the BPA office, which should help to keep costs down.

Lesley Gale suggested, and the Committee agreed, that a decision on the arrangements for updating the web page for "JM's Newsround" on the Magazine website should be held over until the next meeting, pending the outcome of discussions with the new website design company.

In response to a question from Paul Applegate, Lucie Wood confirmed that the database for the online 'Member check' facility was updated weekly.

**Action: Ongoing**

**11/01 RAeC Trust**

The Committee agreed that, subject to the approval of John Smyth (BPA Delegate to RAeC), Lesley Gale should represent the BPA at a seminar being organised by the Royal Aero Club Trust on 'Flying for Youth', for which there was a fee of £35.

**12/01 Content of the Magazine**

Lesley Gale again invited the Committee to think, for discussion at the next meeting, about issues and messages they wished to be covered in the Magazine, which was an important channel of communication with the Membership. She suggested that the strategy might include getting more people into the sport, more education in canopies and better links with clubs.

**Action: Next Meeting**

The Chairman reported that he had had a request from a club for the Magazine to publish a list of the BPA's current Demo Teams (name of team/team leader/where they train and jump).

**13/01 Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 19 June 2001 at 1400 at the BPA Office, Glen Parva, Leicester.

The meeting closed at 1630.