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Communications Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on

Tuesday 18 February 2003 at 1410

at the BPA Offices, 5 Wharf Way, Glen Parva, Leicester

Present:	Eddie Jones	-	Committee Chairman
	Chris Allen		BPA Chairman (for item 3.6)
	Paul Applegate		
	Calvin Blacker		
	Ralph Fielding		
	Billy Gollan		
	David Hickling		
In attendance:	Tony Butler	-	Technical Officer
	Lesley Gale	-	Editor, <i>Skydive Magazine</i>
	John Hitchen	-	NCSO
	Martin Shuttleworth	-	Secretary-General
	Sue Waterfield	-	Administration Secretary
Apologies for absence:	Kieran Brady		
	Ian Midgley		

Item Minute

01/03 Minutes

Paul Applegate proposed, and Eddie Jones seconded, a motion that the minutes of the Communications Committee meeting on Tuesday 3 December 2002 should be approved.

Approved

02/03 Matters arising

2.1 Budget (minute 33.2)

Lesley Gale confirmed that, after the last meeting, Kieran Brady had as he had suggested, sat down with her to set out a template for the format of Magazine budgets. This had been designed to present the budget in a way that was easy to understand, particularly for people who were not financial specialists. Lesley Gale then tabled a sheet showing the budget figures as already agreed by this Committee, and now set out in the agreed presentation format. The Chairman thanked Lesley Gale and Kieran Brady for arranging this clearer form of presentation, which should allow future discussions about the budget to concentrate on the figures rather than how they were presented.

2.2 Redesigned pages for Associated Organisations (minute 33.2)

Lesley Gale reported that, because the updated information that had been requested from Associated Organisations was still being received, the re-designed page would now have to be introduced in the June issue, rather than in the April issue as had originally been planned.

3.1 Proposed BPA skydivers' calendar (minute 36)

Pursuant to minute 36/02, Ralph Fielding tabled an example of a calendar printed in colour that he understood could be personalised for the BPA, with skydiving photographs, at a cost of only £250 for 5000 copies - a unit cost of only 5p, plus delivery. The printers would need to have the photographs by no later than mid-March, as they would need to tie in any order from the BPA with a larger print run of calendars for other clients. Lesley Gale said that the price was far lower than any comparative quote that she could obtain. Although it was difficult to judge the price in the absence of comparative quotations, the Chairman asked that it should be checked and, if correct, confirmed in writing, because it was so low that there had to be a question mark of whether it was too good to be true.

There were approximately 5,400 full BPA Members, so a print run of 6,000 plus would be required if each Member was to receive one free of charge. Lesley Gale suggested a print run of 7,500 so that extra copies could go on public sale through the BPA Shop. The discussion then considered issues of distribution. Distribution could cost considerably more than the calendars themselves. As the example calendar was of a non-standard size, larger than A4, it would not be possible to distribute the calendar as an insert to the Magazine. Posting it out as a one-off was likely to be very expensive. The most attractive option therefore appeared to be to distribute the calendar in bulk via Clubs & Centres, in much the same way as the *Skydive Starter Magazine* was already being distributed. Allowing a contingency for a possibly higher print cost, and an estimate for the cost of distribution by the box to Clubs & Centres, the Committee's estimate of the total all-inclusive cost of this project was £5K.

Ralph Fielding then proposed, and Calvin Blacker seconded, a motion that a target should be included in the Communications Action Plan for 2003/4 to produce a 2004 skydiving calendar, to be issued free of charge to Members, with a budget of £5K (equivalent to less than £1 per Member).

Carried unanimously

(Note: See the note following item 3.4, BPA Poster.)

3.2 e-commerce facility for the Magazine website

Lesley Gale believed that it would be useful to introduce an e-commerce facility on the Magazine website, for which she estimated the cost to be £500. This would be to enable new subscribers to pay for a subscription via a secure electronic link, into which they would enter their payment card details, etc. Currently there were 428 overseas subscribers to the Magazine and this in particular had the potential to increase from a secure online subscription ordering facility. It would be tied in with promotion of the Magazine outside the UK - copies were already mailed to all French, Spanish and Portuguese Drop Zones together with selected key Drop Zones in the USA.

Billy Gollan therefore proposed, and Ralph Fielding seconded, a motion that a target for inclusion in the Communications Action Plan for 2004/5 would be the introduction of a secure e-commerce link to order a subscription to the Magazine online via the Magazine website. The budget was £500.

Carried unanimously

3.3 In-house updates to the Magazine website

Lesley Gale suggested that routine updates to the Magazine website, after each new issue of the Magazine was published, might be undertaken as part of the contract for Editorial Services rather than sent out, as at present, to a specialist web design company, which incurred an extra charge to the BPA. The estimated one-off cost to meet this target was £750, which Lesley Gale believed would soon be recouped from savings on payments to the web design company.

Calvin Blacker therefore proposed, and Paul Applegate seconded, a motion that the target and budget set out in the paragraph above, should be included in the Communications Action Plan for 2003/4.

Carried unanimously

3.4 BPA Poster

Lesley Gale reported that a BPA poster had been requested many times by the Membership. She said that a poster could be printed on the same-varnished paper stock as was used for the cover of the Magazine. The finished poster/s could be distributed by inserting them in the magazine, folded but not stapled. Each could carry the BPA name, contacts and logos. The posters would provide an excellent means of promoting the sport, and spares could be held at the BPA Office for issue to such events as fresher' fairs, trade shows and presentations, etc.

However, Lesley Gale said that, having regard to discussions earlier in the meeting about a BPA calendar (minute 3.1), she believed that there was too much overlap between the idea of a calendar and that of a poster, and it might therefore be inappropriate to progress the poster idea at the same time as the calendar - they were so similar, it really had to be one or the other. Since the calendar had already been voted on and carried, Lesley Gale suggested that the idea of producing a BPA skydiving poster or posters should be held in abeyance at least for the current year. The Committee was content to do this.

(Note: Following further investigation the day after the meeting, the Chairman sent an e-mail to Committee Members to say that unfortunately it looked unlikely that it would be possible to produce and distribute a calendar within the budget that allocated, although prices were continuing to be investigated with various suppliers. To allow for the possibility that the calendar proved to be too expensive to progress, the Chairman proposed that the Committee amend the wording of the target for this action to read "To produce a BPA calendar or poster". Lesley Gale had suggested that it might be possible to produce and distribute at least two different A3 size skydiving posters within the allocated budget. The Chairman had indicated said that the calendar idea would still be pursued, but if it was not possible due to cost to produce a calendar, it would still be possible to deliver on the poster. The Chairman asked that if any Committee Member had an objection to this, or any comment, would they please get back to him as soon as possible.)

3.5 Drop Zone Guide

Lesley Gale reported that most Clubs & Centres had now been featured on the *Drop Zone Focus* page of the Magazine. This had built up a body of work over several years that provided a considerable source of information on BPA Affiliated Drop Zones. Although some of the information needed to be updated, Lesley Gale suggested that it might be useful to pull together all of the individual pages into a *BPA Drop Zone Guide*. There followed a discussion about whether a hard copy and/or electronic format would be most appropriate for this publication. The consensus emerged that publication on the Internet afforded the best means of disseminating up-to-date information. Further, it was suggested that any such information should equally be accessible from the BPA and *Skydive Magazine* websites. A budget of £2.5K would be required for this work.

Ralph Fielding therefore proposed, and Calvin Blacker seconded, a motion that an electronic version of a consolidated and updated *Drop Zone Focus* for access via both the BPA and *Skydive Magazine* websites, at a budget of £2.5K, be included as a Communications Action Plan target for the year 2003/4.

Carried unanimously

3.6 Website team advertisement page, and interactive coaching

Chris Allen, BPA Chairman, joined the meeting for this item, to speak to an idea about which he had circulated a written note just ahead of the meeting. He said he was keen to improve the interactivity of the BPA website and exploit more of the potential of today's digital technologies. He was therefore suggesting a phased approach that would be centred on competitions activity, and for which he was sure that the Competitions Committee would provide support and assistance on the technical content.

Firstly, and at a budget of £500, Chris Allen suggested the introduction of a team advertisement page on the BPA website. This would enable individual BPA Members to advertise to find a team, and teams to advertise for team members. This was expected to use much the same format as the already established 'classified advertisements' page on the BPA website, which

should make it technically fairly straightforward to introduce. David Hickling proposed, and Calvin Blacker seconded, a motion to include this target, at the stated budget, in the Communications Action Plan for 2003/4.

Carried unanimously

Moving on to his suggestion for a coaching page, Chris Allen proposed a dynamic page that would change every month during the summer season (July, August and September 2003 and June 2004). Each month, the coaching page would focus on a different discipline. It would outline a particular skydive or technique with pictures and expert commentary on how to do it. There would be the opportunity for questions to be submitted to an appropriate coach via the page, and the coach would be able to post both the question and the reply on the page. The actual location of the coach and the teams being coached would be irrelevant, as everything would be done over the Internet. This would give coaches based outside the UK the opportunity to contribute to coaching in the UK without ever leaving their home base. It would be necessary for the website design company used by the BPA to create the page with the appropriate interactive facility, which would then be serviced by the BPA Office; and, through the Competitions Committee, to secure coaching input and feedback from National Teams and other coaches in the BUPA's Skills Coaching Road show programme. The budget would be £1000 for set up, plus £200 a month for servicing, total £1,800.

Paul Applegate proposed, and Ralph Fielding seconded, a motion to include the above target, at the stated budget, in the Communications Action Plan for 2003/4.

Carried unanimously

Chris Allen explained that he saw the interactive coaching page as the first of a multi-stage process for the development of greater interactivity on the BPA website. Future developments might include a facility for teams to upload videos of training jumps, which could then be viewed and commented upon by coaches. There was even the possibility of extending the same approach to competitions judging, although in his view this was at least 2 or 3 years ahead. Chris Allen said that the UK was presently at the forefront of broadband technology - which was continuing to evolve and become even faster - and that skydiving was in a good position to exploit the features it offered. But it was important not to be too ambitious to start with, and to plan the exploitation of such technology in a structured and phased manner - hence his suggestion of the interactive coaching pager as a starting point. The Committee thanked Chris Allen for taking such a forward-looking view, which they were sure would be of benefit to the Association.

04/03 Report on Skydive Magazine

Lesley Gale reported that the February 2003 issue of *Skydive Magazine* had been published and that the feedback to date had been generally good. The *Club News* section was now clearly delineated into Affiliated Clubs & Centres and non-BPA Affiliated organisations. Lesley Gale tabled an editorial report summarising the content of the February and April issues. The Committee was satisfied with the planned content, and thanked Lesley Gale for the report.

The report also set out the current performance of the magazine against budget, which was looking good. Expenditure was running at £1,363 (2%) over budget, but this was expected to even out, and income from the membership to date had been £2,500 higher than forecast, giving a net performance of 2% better than budget. Paul Applegate asked why the print cost had increased over budget. In reply, Lesley Gale stated that the cost of printing the minutes had increased considerably, from £190 to £490 per issue. This £300 increase was largely attributable to the more comprehensive, and therefore longer, minutes now transcribed. A discussion followed on whether this cost could be cut, but the Committee noted that responses to the 2002 membership survey had indicated that over 90% of Members read the minutes, and the Committee acknowledged that this was an important means of disseminating information by which the membership could monitor and influence developments within their Association.

Lesley Gale then reviewed the options of different printing techniques to save money on printing the Magazine itself. Last year, she had tried the slightly cheaper process of web print, but this

had not proved to be successful as the print quality was poorer and the process caused a problem with the stapling that led to the middle pages working loose in some copies. Another way to save on print costs would be to opt for 8 pages of mono (black and white) per issue. However, she believed that any such cost-cutting measures would be detrimental to the magazine and hopefully would not be necessary, as she hoped to turn a forecast loss of £1K on the magazine account for the year into a modest profit of about £50. The committee agreed that to opt for some pages in black and white would be a backward step.

Turning to the Magazine Open Forum at the AGM, Lesley Gale noted that this year, it had not been as well attended as in previous years. She believed this to have been because the majority of Members had already raised any significant issues they may have had about the Magazine, meaning that there were fewer live issues for discussion. Lesley Gale therefore considered that next year it might be time for a change to the format of the Magazine's session at the AGM. She thought that it might be helpful to give a presentation about the behind the scenes work of putting the Magazine together, so Members could see what was involved and ask questions.

Lesley Gale said she was planning a meeting with John Hitchen and Rick Boardman to discuss the format of the Incident Reports published in the Magazine.

05/03 Report on website development

Martin Shuttleworth reported that Craig Poxon, who was a Member of this Committee last year, had kindly, and at his own initiative, completely re-designed the 'previous minutes' page of the BPA website. The new, more compact and easier-to-use design had recently been loaded on the site.

The notice board page had been given a makeover, so that several headlines now appeared together, to give more of an impact. There were also more internal links from the headlines, to improve the navigability of the site. Martin Shuttleworth said he would like to see more emphasis of the notice board on the home page, as the notice board was perhaps the most frequently updated page of the BPA website, yet there was no way of highlighting it as an important page to visit. He had therefore included this as part of his proposal to re-design the homepage of the BPA website, which was included in his suggestions on website development that would be coming before the Development Committee for consideration at their meeting later this afternoon.

Turning to the Magazine website, Lesley Gale reported that Bevy Airburst was now updating *JM's Newsround* on the Magazine website every two weeks, and that, as with the BPA website, emphasis was being laid on quick-to-view headlines as a way of showcasing the items featured lower down the page, thereby encouraging visitors to scroll down and dwell.

Lesley Gale reported that the *Dive Doctor* feature was receiving a good many questions, and she asked for Committee Members, and any experienced colleagues they knew, to offer to help to give reliable answers to some of the questions that had been submitted.

06/03 Visit to the Magazine's Office

The Chairman noted with thanks Lesley Gale's kind invitation for the Committee to hold a future meeting at the Magazine's office in Peterborough, so that Committee Members could familiarise themselves with the nature of the work undertaken there. The Chairman thought that it would be an excellent idea for Committee Members to visit the Magazine office. However, the scheduling of Committee meetings in Leicester, with Communications preceding meetings of the Development a Committee and the Council later in the same day, would make it difficult to have a meeting in Peterborough without devoting a full day to it. The Chairman therefore asked Lesley Gale whether it might be possible for Committee Members to visit the Magazine office on an ad hoc basis, by prior arrangement with her, whenever they had the opportunity to be in the Peterborough area? Lesley Gale said this would be a good idea, and she hoped that as many Committee Members as possible would take up the invitation.

07/03 Dates of next meetings

Tuesdays at 1400 at the BPA Office, Glen Para, Leicester (ahead of meetings of the Development Committee for those involved, at 1600; and the Council at 1830): 15 April, 17 June, 19 August, 21 October, and 2 December.

Lesley Gale tendered her apologies for absence for the next meeting, to be held at 1400 on Tuesday 15 April, when she would be on holiday. The Committee agreed with Lesley Gale that Bev Fairhurst, Editorial and Website Co-ordinator, should come to the meeting to represent the Magazine in the Editor's absence.

The meeting closed at 1550.