

Approved Minutes of NEC meeting held on 27th January 2024 on Zoom

Present: Keith Rowland (Chair), Anthony Hayes (Treasurer), Diane Holt (Membership Secretary), Martin Winter and Helen Secker (SER), Alan Hartley (WHMF) John Atkinson and Christine Lazenby (NER), John and Jane Willis (SWR), Laura Buist (SR), Mike Johnson and Judy Gees (EMR) Beth McCord and Kate Worthington (NWR), Linda McCord and John Thompson (EAR), David Hampson (WMR) Roger Lazenby (NER), Malcolm Wilson (SR), Jacky Cooper, ILO, Lysbeth Wilson, HLM,

1. Chairman's welcome

Keith welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Mike Johnson from the East Midlands.

2. Apologies for Absence

John Elcock

3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes were accepted. Proposed : John Atkinson Seconded: Martin Winter

4. Regional Matters

South East

Martin Winter and Helen Secker are representing the region following the resignation of Gay and Alan Cooper. The Christmas get together and the series of six or seven mini rallies have been successful. The regional orchestra is back rehearsing in a new venue in North Camp. The AGM has been arranged for March 2024.

North East

John A reported a disappointing six months with the cancellation of rallies. The issue of travel, distance and the demographic of the region is the problem with people feeling disinclined to travel long distances to rallies. The region will revisit the idea of mini rallies and this may be the way forward for the region. The Grassington Rally will be on 11th May 2024 and is always well attended. The team in Hessle has reformed and a new team called All Saints Roos HBR has been registered leading to an increase in membership in the NE region.

Sue King has applied to borrow the Liversedge bells, John mentioned.

Scotland

The Dunblane Rally in October to celebrate Lysbeth Wilson's BEM was well attended, despite the rain. Lysbeth was unable to attend in person but was able to make an appearance online for a time.

A new team in Duddingston, near Edinburgh, has formed and a Spring Rally is being planned.

East Midlands

Mike Johnson has been appointed as Acting Chair following the resignation of Nicola Wright from the Committee. The Autumn rally hosted by Anthony Hayes had low numbers but was a great success, with the appearance of a new team called All Saints.

The Spring Rally and AGM will be on 23rd March 2024 at Harlaxton village hall. The region has had several teams close down following the pandemic, so membership numbers have decreased.

Regional Matters

East Midlands, continued

The region has been left all of the late Tegwen Manton's handbells, chimes, cowbells and sundry accessories. Judy has spent an enormous amount of time cataloguing and photographing the equipment and was thanked by Alan Hartley, who is in the process of drawing up a Deed of Transfer.

Judy's two school teams are thriving and gave a concert to the Minster Junior School parents at Christmas. An article and photo will be appearing in Young Vibrations. The teams will be managed by the year 4 teacher following Judy's retirement from the school at Easter.

South West

The SW region is thriving with successful rallies in the Autumn and a Christmas Prelude. The S'Westers gave a concert in Bodmin which was oversubscribed and attracted an audience of two hundred. A team in Cornwall has closed and has donated a set of bells which will be used in either Cornwall or Devon. The AGM will be in March 2024 and a full programme of events including the Christmas Prelude and a festival have been planned for the coming year.

West Midlands

David reported that the region is struggling a little with the loss of two teams and twenty members to the South West region. There has been discontent from Jason Walker and Kris Perruzza who have moved regions, with their teams Burghill and Tillington and Tintinnabulis. Jason and Kris are valuable, young members who are excellent ringers who organise rallies and workshops.

The David Williams Memorial rally had to be cancelled due the another rally having been organised by Jason two weeks before. There are twenty two teams in the WM region but only six teams attend rallies usually. A new team, Kingtone, has registered but is a one member team.

Action: Keith to talk to David separately to discuss this matter.

There was a discussion about HRGB Rule 27 relating to the regions teams played in and it was decided that teams can move regions following a request to the Membership Secretary, with immediate effect. The NEC does not have to approve a transfer.

East Anglia

The Autumn rally was rather poignant, following the sudden death of Pauline Franks. The rally was organised by Francis and Emily Franks with music that had been chosen by Pauline.

Christmas was busy for teams. Two new teams have formed using bells found in churches, and the teams have asked for help from the regional committee.

A sub committee has been formed to organise the National Rally for 11-13 April 2025.

One member teams has been discussed by the committee and an article about the benefit of joining HRGB will be published in the regional newsletter.

North West

The regional committee has been busy organising the 2024 National Rally.

A recent mini rally was cancelled but the region feels that mini rallies are popular with teams generally. A summer event returning to Llandudno is planned.

5. Future Events

(i) National Events

1. National Rally, 5 -7 April 2024 (NW Region)

One hundred and eighty three people have registered for the National Rally. The committee has been chasing second payments, organising the workshops and choosing the music.

The venue has insisted that anyone visiting for the AGM must pay a fee of £25. Anyone wishing to visit the site for the AGM will need to tell me, Judy Gees, by 7th March 2024. This has been put on the AGM Calling Notice. I have not been notified of anyone to date.

One team of six members, who will be playing in the evening concert, will use regional funds to pay for their attendees.

2. National Rally 11 –13 April 2025 (EA region)

The rally will be held at Kents Hill Training and Conference Centre in Milton Keynes. Contracts have been signed and the deposit has been paid. A ballpark figure of about £290 per person is being estimated. Hilary Holt is chairing the organising committee. The venue is in a central location with excellent communication links, shops, parks and Woburn Abbey nearby.

Workshop leaders are being sought and people will be approached.

Further information will be available at the national Rally in Swanwick in April 2024,

3. National Skills Day 2026 (SW Region)

There has been a set back in that the venue planned is no longer available as it has closed down, and the committee has had to start from scratch again.

4. National Diamond Jubilee event 2027

David H from the West Midlands region has said that the region does not have sufficient members to organise an event like this, particularly with the loss of two members of the committee. The East Midlands, under the previous Chair, had offered to help but following a recent regional committee meeting, this offer has been withdrawn. This event will need further consideration from the NEC at a future meeting.

5. AGM

This will be held at 1.30pm in the Main Hall of the Derbyshire Suite of the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick in Derbyshire. There have been four nominations for the National Officer positions.

(ii) Virtual events

Previous webinars have been well attended and well received.

18 October 2023, a webinar on building bigger brains by bell ringing, was hosted by Katrina Gordon.

The webinar on 16 November 2023 was hosted by Malcolm W and Aidan F and was about concert performance programming, repertoire and how to sell a concert.

Virtual events, continued

Four webinars have been planned in outline as follows, with titles, descriptors, dates and times to be finalised:

28th March, 8.30pm– Introduction to the HRGB Crescendo Scheme – led by John Willis.

June – How to absorb new ringers into your existing established team – led by Mike Johnson as a panel chair.

September – What might you find helpful to know if you're a new handbell ringer in an existing team (covering things like how to know where your note is on the music, what each notation means, rhythms, parts of a handbell) – led by Aidan Fozard.

November— Finding and applying to grant funding sources and fundraising ideas—panel led by Mike Johnson.

(iii) International Events

1. 21st International Symposium, Japan, 2024

See report from Jacky Cooper.

Jacky Cooper stated that there are twenty five ringers registered from the UK and five hundred and eighty five altogether. The early bird registration date has passed and the closing date is 15th April 2024.

Ringers are awaiting the music and John W has been organising the polo shirts. The only music that is certain is Sandra Winter's new composition. Details of the other music is uncertain at present.

2. 22nd international Symposium, UK 2026.

The build has stopped temporarily due to a change in contractors, but the plans to open the conference centre in 2025 are still on target. The organising committee can move forward to look at hotels and publicity materials, so that this information can be taken to Japan.

The logo competition attracted eleven logos and one written entry. The winning logo featured bells and the Tyne bridge together with the symposium strapline. The competition winner is Margaret Reid from Wick in Scotland.

6. Past events

None to report.

Business Matters

7. Money Matters

i) The 2023 accounts have not been closed off yet and regions are starting to send in their accounts.

The post of Examiner of Accounts is vacant at present following the withdrawal of the previous examiners.

The Public liability Insurance has been set up and has been circulated to Officers and interested parties.

Anthony warned about a phishing e mail that was being sent to HRGB members and he asked members to be vigilant, not to open the e mail and to delete it.

Money matters, continued.

ii) Donation of £2000 from the estate of Nick Ottmann.

Proposal from the SE Committee (see paper submitted)

The SE Region would like to propose that Nick's bequest to the society be used to set up a bursary fund. The fund to be used to support ringers with any form of 'additional need' to attend any HRGB national event or international symposium. Each bursary to be £200 or the total cost of the event registration if lower.

This was agreed by the NEC in principal.

Action. Judy G to write to the Ottmann family to let them know about the SE proposal to use the bequest to support ringers with "additional needs."

A working group formed of Anthony H, Malcolm W, Mike J and Martin W will look at the details of the proposal. Points for consideration include who will administer the fund, a name for the fund (Nick Ottmann Memorial Bursary was suggested), can the fund be added to and the application process.

iii) The NEC acknowledges the thanks from Samuel Davies in the East Midlands region for funding his place at the National Rally via the Vaughan Evans Fund.

8. The Education Group

Linda McCord, Chair of the Education Group, wrote to regional secretaries asking what financial provision is available to young ringers in their areas. Two regions have funds available but there is not parity of opportunity of for young members and this was deemed to be unfair.

The Education Group would like to relaunch the Vaughan Evans fund as it is felt that the fund is not widely known about and is not user friendly. The fund was set up originally to offer two bursaries a year, one to the region hosting the National Rally and one to another region, upon an application in writing to the HRGB Officers. This does not seem to be happening.

Modification of the terms would be advisable and will be considered by the Education Group, who will report back to the NEC at the June 2024 meeting with their suggestions for change.

The Tees Valley music hub is thriving using bells loaned by the Education Group, who wish to promote handbell ringing in schools.

Action: Education Group to propose changes to the Vaughan Evans Fund and to report back to the NEC in June 2024.

9. Proposal from Tim Willetts regarding the Musical Directors' seminar. See written paper from Tim and response from the North West region, read out at the NEC meeting by Beth McCord

The following is the North West Regional Committee's response to the question; should HRGB be subsidising the conductor's seminar weekend?

We discussed this at our committee meeting on the 26 th November and unanimously agreed that yes, HRGB should be subsidising events such as the conductor's seminar weekend.

As a region we have benefitted from having NW members attend this event. They are flagged on the database as having participated in the seminar and since completing the weekend they have taken on more roles within the at regional (and indeed at national) events as well as becoming team leaders/musical directors of their own teams.

Musical Directors' Seminar, response from NW region, continued.

There is no question that the majority of people who attended this event would not have been able to afford to do so had it not been subsidised. It was made as fair as possible with people from all regions attending and all members of HRGB having the right to apply for a place, whilst making it clear that it was aimed at team leaders/musical directors.

Those who participated were required to provide feedback as to how the course benefitted them (and thus the teams and regions of HRGB) both immediately after the course and a few months later so that there was a record of progress made.

We believe that this is the sort of thing that members of HRGB should be benefitting from as part of their membership to our society. In turn it increases the number of people who can be called upon to lead sessions at regional and national events. In looking to promote the longevity of the society then this is exactly the sort of thing we should be offering to our members.

NW committee

Other NEC members who had attended the courses commented how useful they were and how their regions had benefitted from the training given. Paying outside providers to teach conducting skills was not considered good use of HRGB funds as the society has a wealth of in house talent who could teach the courses. Means testing was not a popular approach.

Laura Buist proposed a flat fee of £150 per person. This was seconded by Malcolm Wilson. The proposal was agreed by the NEC.

Action: Keith R to notify Tim W of this decision.

10 Safeguarding Report

Kate Worthington stated that there had not been any safeguarding incidents reported recently. There is a skills list that has been set up by John Willis. The safeguarding team has suggested that it would be a good idea to update the list to include which HRGB members have DBS clearance and safeguarding training.

Action: NEC reps to contact their regional newsletter editors to ask them to include a short paragraph in their newsletters asking for members to come forward if they had DBS checks in place and had undergone safeguarding training. This information to be passed to John Willis to update the skills register on the database.

11. Charity Commission update

Nothing to report

Officers' reports for this meeting

12. Membership update

Renewals are ongoing and definitive membership numbers will not be known until March 2024.

A new team of one hundred and twenty junior ringers has been registered in Caithness. This would appear to be the whole school!

Two hundred and eighty one membership cards have been sent out and this reduction is a huge saving on postage costs to HRGB.

Membership update continued.

John Willis mentioned that at present Reverberations is sent out to members in the grace period, ie up to 31st January 2024. It was suggested that an e mail be sent out to members who had not renewed letting them know that they would not be getting a hard copy of Reverberations but that the publication will be available online. This idea was not universally accepted.

It was proposed that HRGB would the leave arrangement for getting Reverberations during the grace period as it is this year, but next year, members would be informed that they would not get the magazine if they renewed late. Members who did not renew at all, would cease to get Reverberations. Further discussion will be needed at a later date.

13. Sales Update

Nothing to report

14. Website update

Development of the next version of the software is ongoing. A series of meetings with website suppliers have taken place and the new website is in the test area with a view to going live next year.

15. Social media update

i) Statistics for HRGB national social media accounts (as at 18 January 2024):

- Facebook followers 947 (up 15 since September 2023)
- X Platform (formerly known as Twitter) followers 268 (up 3 since September 2023)
- YouTube subscribers 50 (up 1 since September 2023)
- Instagram followers 278 (up 7 since September 2023)

Thanks to all those from the regions who share to the national Facebook page - it helps amplify what's happening around the country with members nationally. Thanks to Jason Walker and Kris Perruzza of Tintinnabulus and Burghill and Tillington Handbell Ringers for helping with the HRGB national YouTube channel, and Kirsty Richardson from Jordanhill Handbell Ringers who is helping mainly with Instagram.

li) A draft Social Media policy document was written by Malcolm Wilson and has been shared.

Action: Please have a look at the policy document sent with the Agenda and send your comments to Malcolm with a view to approving, not approving or amending the policy document at our next meeting on 7th March 2024.

16 Reverberations

i) See Membership update, item 12, above relating to Reverberations.

ii) Young Vibrations report from Rona Gager, NE Region:

Youth Reps from the regions were contacted and asked for any news, photographs etc. Contributions were received from two teams: Bournemouth Youth Handbell Team and Minster Minis in Nottinghamshire. News of individuals from teams were from Caithness, where Peter has received a Crescendo Award and eleven year old Megan of St Bartholomew HR, Areley Kings. Looking forward, I hope that more youth reps, young ringers and youth teams will forward their news. Other ideas I have for YV are to include information on the Crescendo scheme and applying for bursaries to enable young people to attend events such as the National Residential Ringing Week and UK Bronze.

17. Archives

Alan Hartley has said how co-operative Heritage Quay is and feedback is given within twenty four hours. Online discussions can be booked and have been very successful.

There is a researcher in Bristol producing a booklet which lists all shellac and vinyl recordings of handbells and he is going to include HRGB in his booklet.

18. William Hartley Memorial Fund

Nothing to report

19. Matters arising from last NEC meeting.

John Atkinson has followed up a lead with a U3A conference in York but nothing has come of this.

20. Correspondence

Since the last NEC meeting there have been sixty two contact messages via the national page, with fifteen of these being about booking ringers for Christmas. The others range, as ever, from queries about valuing/selling/refurbishing/repairing bells, membership and renewals, national rally, Reverberations, information in the archive and HRGB events both live and online. There has been a marked increase in the number of enquiries about insurance following the closure of Balens' services. I am extremely grateful to the regional secretaries to whom I send the majority of queries, and in particular both John W and Diane H who bear the brunt of the technical problems and membership queries!

21 HRGB Diary Dates

As always please let John Willis know about your rallies and events so that they can be placed on the website on the Diary page.

22 AOB

Beth asked if anyone could provide additional foams for the National rally in April 2024.

John Atkinson offered the BTHBR foams but could not transport bells AND foams. Judy Gees offered eleven foams, but bringing bells and chimes would then be problematic.

23. Date of next meeting: Thursday, 7th March at 7.30pm via zoom.

The meeting closed at 12.36pm.

Judy Gees

NEC Secretary