

Approved Minutes of NEC meeting held on 1st April 2023 on Zoom

Present: Tim Willetts (Chair), Anthony Hayes (Treasurer), Diane Holt (Membership Secretary), Gay and Alan Cooper (SER), Alan Hartley (WHMF) John Atkinson and Christine Lazenby (NER), John and Jane Willis (SWR), John Elcock and Laura Buist (SR), Mike Johnson and Judy Gees (EMR) Beth McCord and Kate Worthington (NWR), Linda McCord and John Thompson (EAR), Corrie Paxton and David Hampson (WMR) Malcolm Wilson (SR), Roger Lazenby (NER)

1. Chair's welcome

Everyone was welcomed and David Hampson was congratulated as the new Chair of the West Midlands Region.

2. Apologies for absence

Lysbeth Wilson. Laura Buist will join us at lunchtime.

3. Minutes of last meeting held on 28th January 2023 and matters arising.

The minutes were approved after some minor amendments.

Proposed: John Willis Seconded: Diane Holt

Judy was thanked for typing the minutes for the 28th January 2023 meeting.

4 and 5i) Regional Matters and Regional events in 2023.

Scotland

Final preparations are being made for the National Rally in Stirling. At the recent AGM on zoom, Ruth Cantlay was appointed as the new Regional Secretary. There will be an autumn rally in Dunblane, a spring rally and AGM in Wick in 2024 and a face to face committee meeting on 20th May 2023.

North West

The AGM was held recently and there have not been any additions to the committee. Events are coming up as published on the HRGB diary pages.

North East

The AGM will be held at Grassington on 13th May 2023. There is a Northern Bell Orchestra concert in Sheffield on 20th May 2023.

Some members of the region took part in a concert in Bradford recently and played Eric Whitacre's piece entitled Cloudburst, where handbells were used to represent thunder and rain, to great effect.

West Midlands

At the recent AGM, David Hampson was appointed as the new Chair. The Secretary position is to be shared between Margaret Moss and Wendy Hartwright. Events listed in the HRGB diary dates will be going ahead. The WM ensemble meets on the first weekend of the month. Corrie P. will clarify the diary dates with John W.

4 and 5i) Regional Matters and Regional events in 2023, continued.

East Midlands

There have been committee meetings on zoom and the AGM will be held at a rally in Ruskington in Lincolnshire on 29th April 2023. Mike mentioned a performance by his team of a piece by Dan Forrest called In Paradisium where the ringers played in the last two minutes of the piece from the Minstrels' Gallery.

East Anglia

The AGM has taken place. Linda to remain Chair, Phil Day has been appointed as the new Treasurer and there are two new additions to the committee. At the recent well attended rally, a piece was played to remember Kathy Rose. The piece had been commissioned for Kathy's 50th birthday.

South West

The AGM has taken place and Ann Tyack has been appointed as the new Regional Secretary, taking over from Vicki Ferguson who is not well. There will be a rally in Bristol in September to remember Ryan Price. Teams from other regions will be invited to attend the rally.

South East

(written report received by e mail)

"Eighty people attended the recent AGM. The constitution was changed to remove the maximum periods officers and Committee members may serve before taking a year out.

The potential impact of London's Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) , which will soon be expanding, was mentioned. As more towns and cities bring in ULEZs and Clean Air Zones, we may need to consider their effects on getting to events, particularly for those members with diesel cars.

Future events in the diary include the SERBO concert on 28th May, the Handbell Festival Service at Guildford Cathedral on 17th June and various rallies.

Following the success of the "Christmas Together" a similar event, "Tea Together", is planned for the summer. Groups of two or more local teams can get together in micro-rallies at any time over the summer, to ring to each other and ring together music of a summery nature. The music to ring together will be provided for free by the region, and taken from the SE music list and is a clear benefit of being a member of HRGB. A repeat of Christmas Together will be advertised in the autumn."

In some regions, ULEZ apply to commercial vehicles only, in others diesel cars are included too.

Future Events

ii) National Events

1. National Rally 2023, Stirling

Workshops and the music have been organised and thanks were given to the planning committee.

2. National Residential Ringing Week 2023, Sheffield.

Nothing to report.

ii) National Events, continued

3. National Rally 2024.

Plans are ongoing and will be brought to Scotland by the NW region. The cost will be between £265 and £300.

4. National Rally 2025

An initial approach has been made to Wymondham College, who can offer the same facilities as before, but the term dates have not been set yet. A second potential venue has been contacted.

5. National Rally, 2026. (See paper 5ii)

The SW region has offered to host an event possibly to be called a National Skills Day, aimed at individuals rather than teams, in 2026.

There were discussions about not having the HRGB AGM at the National Rally in person but as a zoom meeting online, in order to save transport costs for some. Some members could be disenfranchised by this. Blended meetings where there is an in person meeting with live streaming whereby members can comment and contribute were mentioned. This may be difficult logistically due to technology. Voting by Proxy was discussed.

TW summed up saying there was a strong feeling towards moving the AGM to zoom in the future and this will be explored further.

The proposal brought by the SW region in paper 5ii) to hold an event in 2026 was agreed by the NEC.

The SW region will not be asked to organise an event in 2027, which will be the 60 year anniversary of HRGB since it was founded in 1967. As this will be the Diamond Anniversary year of HRGB Alan Hartley suggested the following:

Is there a region or regions together who would like to organise an event in 2027 for our Diamond Jubilee celebrations?

iii) Virtual Events, paper 5iii)

There has been one offer from Mike Johnson to join the organising group. Two regions have responded to the questionnaire sent by TW to Regional Chairs in respect of the webinars. At the SE AGM volunteers were sought to join the organising group, but none were forthcoming. A suggestion was made to demonstrate HRGB music at a webinar, in order to help music sales. Another suggestion was to have a webinar aimed at Junior ringers demonstrating the Crescendo scheme, for example.

TW commented that learning opportunities have been reduced as not all rallies offer workshops allowing members to learn new skills. Some thought that massed ringing at rallies was an opportunity to learn whilst others felt it was not. One comment received following the National Rally in , was that the music was too difficult. Some felt that two or three bars could be concentrated on and new techniques learned. TW requested NEC members to promote learning opportunities where possible.

iv) Virtual events

1. 21st International Symposium , Japan.

Nothing to report.

2. 22nd International Symposium, UK

Martin Winter will make a report to the NEC in the future. There have been some responses offering help following the announcement on 17th February 2023 and offers of help are always welcomed from the organising group.

6. Past Events

i) MD's Seminar Weekend

There has been a six month evaluation of this event. TW shared some of the comments received. Please contact TW to obtain a copy of this document, if you would like one.

TW has written to Regional Chairs asking them to offer opportunities to conduct at rallies to the members who attended the weekend.

JW was asked to put the names of the attendees on the database but does not know the names at present. TW to send JW a list of names.

Strategic Development

S1 Linking the Bells into Schools programme with the handbell programme at the University of Northumbria.

Paper S1 was discussed. Recommendations to NEC:

1. Support the view of the Education Group, that education resources should be focussed in the Newcastle/Gateshead area for the next few years and actively pursue ways of achieving this. **CARRIED**
2. In support of 1 above, agree that the four sets of instruments purchased with the Bells into Schools grant should be made available to Northumbria University Music Department for outreach work with schools for academic years 2023-2024, 2024-2025, 2025-2026. The NEC should ask the Education Group to review this decision during the autumn of 2024 and also if Katherine Butler changes roles or leaves the University. **CARRIED**

AH stated that there should be a formal lease agreement in place with the University.

3. NE region to consider ways in which the Region can support the links between the University and schools and to actively pursue these.

The NE representatives both said that Katherine Butler had been invited to attend rallies and to contribute to newsletters but she has failed to respond to date. The point was made that communication needs to be a two way process and that the NE region does not know how to support the recommendation to engage with Katherine Butler and that there are very few teams in the far NE area. **CARRIED**, the NE region will try to make contact.

4. Linda McCord will Chair the Education Group meetings.

S2 Links with the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme

The paper discussed whether HRGB should investigate further about becoming an Approved Activity Provider under the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme and whether the Crescendo scheme should be adopted as a framework for the D of E scheme.

Handbells are no longer listed as an activity that can be undertaken. Corrie will pursue this to ask that handbells should be added to the D of E list.

Various comments were made about D of E volunteers joining teams then disappearing after they had completed their three, six or twelve months commitment. Malcolm W has one junior ringer at present with one of his teams, and there is a Junior at Clifton registered under the D of E scheme. Scouts and Guides seem to have more success with the scheme but this may be due to community based rather than musical activities such as handbell ringing. There may be an image problem with handbell ringing?

TW would like team leaders to raise the profile of ringing and perhaps we should refer to ringing music on handbells rather than change ringing or tune ringing on handbells, phrases which might not be understood by non ringers.

Corrie will take this further and will write an article for Reverberations encouraging Team Leaders to take up the D of E scheme where possible with Junior ringers. Also, she will try to get handbell ringing back on the approved list of D of E activities.

Business Matters

7. Money matters

Paper 7i)

The 2022 Accounts have been prepared by Anthony Hayes, National Treasurer. He was thanked for his hard work in preparing the accounts, which will be formally accepted at the HRGB AGM in April.

Paper 7ii) Proposal for the signing of the accounts by Anthony Hayes.

This proposal was carried unanimously.

8. AGM 2023

i) Keith Rowland has been nominated as Chair. TW asked NEC members to support KR, as well as they had supported him. TW has spent some time briefing KR and will continue to do so if necessary.

ii) Current Chairs Report to the AGM, paper 8.

The vacant posts regionally and nationally have been highlighted in the report and do need to be addressed.

Declining membership is the biggest issue that the Society has to address. Despite some members' protestations that this could not be true, the only year recently when membership has increased is the year we gave financial rewards to teams who found new members.

9. Safeguarding

i) Kate Worthington from the NW region has offered to take on the role of National Safeguarding Officer. TW thanked Kate for this and she was confirmed as National Safeguarding Officer, by the whole NEC.

Safeguarding , continued.

ii) The Charity Commission's guidance on bullying and cyberbullying in our safeguarding policy, paper 9ii)

The new paragraph on page 1 and bullet point on page 3, both highlighted in red in the draft Policy statement circulated before the meeting, were agreed by a majority of the NEC.

Regional Safeguarding Officers will be asked how to move forward to establish a set of procedures. KW commented that a lot of the work has been done already and that we need to produce a simple procedure for records to be kept and actions to be taken when incidents are reported.

Alan Hartley pointed out that if an incident is serious enough, under the Society's Rule 38, a member can be removed from HRGB.

iii) NSPCC training, paper 9iii)

The paper gives details of training opportunities offered by the NSPCC.

The cost is £25 per person and this should be claimed back from HRGB.

Recommendation 1. HRGB Trustees should go through the NSPCC Charity Trustee training programme.

Agreed by NEC

Recommendation 2. Regional Officers and others interested in doing so should be supported to go through the same programme. It will be helpful to have several HRGB members in each region who have basic safeguarding training.

Agreed by NEC

iv) Safeguarding records– permissions, paper 9 iv)

A log of safeguarding incidents is kept on TW's computer at present and is password protected. KW has suggested that the file should be kept online in the Cloud and should be accessible to Regional Safeguarding Officers.

Regional Chairs and Safeguarding Officers should be aware of incidents in their own regions, and new Regional Safeguarding Officers should be advised of past incidents relating to safeguarding in their regions.

There was a discussion relating to the document wording (eg "added to" instead of "changed"), permissions to edit, conflict of interest and so on. KW asked how many complaints are made before action is taken, as safeguarding is not just a case of collecting information. As highlighted by AH above, Rule 38 can be used to remove an HRGB member if necessary.

It was decided that the National Safeguarding Officer and the Regional Safeguarding Officers together would consider this matter further and that KW would report back to the NEC.

10. Recruitment of skills that we need—follow up information from the Charity Commission, paper 10

TW gave an explanation of the Reach Volunteering website and showed an advert that he proposed to put on the website for a marketing advisor for HRGB. The wording was discussed and it was decided to put under Paragraph 1, item 3 “To increase the number of people making music with handbells”.

- One suggested wording in the advert was “ To support the work of the Officers and Members of the National Executive Committee to....”

TW will place the advert on the Reach Volunteering website and will include his own details as a point of contact for prospective advisors. The question of who will select and manage the work of the prospective advisor/s was raised and this will be discussed at a future NEC meeting.

11. Member ship Cards, paper 11.

The NW region has proposed that on next year’s renewal form it should state that membership cards will not be issued unless requested– and to see how many are actually requested.

The reason for the proposal was the expense of sending out the cards to correspondents, about £2, and that printing membership cards is not environmentally friendly.

Various points were raised including HRGB members wanting cards, correspondents wanting cards to prove that members had been registered in their teams, marketing opportunities to attract new HRGB members, and that cards can be used to gain insurance discounts. The HRGB lapel badges are a useful tool to attract new members too, but possibly not cards?

An e mail to the correspondent detailing who had registered in a team or an acknowledgement e mail to individuals was discussed. Issues of GDPR were mentioned. Cards for life and the validation of cards at events was discussed. It was noted that Regional Secretaries have the ability to check HRGB membership status on the database. A membership card on a mobile was suggested, like Costa Coffee.

Other suggestions were to issue a deadline of 31st January and stick to it, put back the publication date of Reverberations, renewals to be in the Autumn, put an insert in Reverberations with membership details. The usefulness of the tear off portion of the current letter to HRGB members was highlighted as a way of letting the Membership Secretary know about changes of address.

MJ asked if there was a need to have a membership card for any reason?

AH thought that we should look at this from the HRGB members’ viewpoint and not the NEC.

TW suggested that as there was not sufficient clarity as to what is wanted by the HRGB members or the NEC, we should not vote on this.

An amendment was suggested by Malcolm Wilson:

We confirm that the membership renewal form should have a tick box for each team to indicate whether they wish to have a membership card, and we ask the NEC to explore further the need for membership cards.

This was formally proposed by Tim Willetts and seconded by Laura Buist.

Agreed by NEC

An article will be placed in the autumn issue of Reverberations highlighting the issue. BM stated in her original proposal that she would write the article.

12 Charity Commission News

Nothing to report.

Officers' Report for this meeting

13. Membership Update, paper 13.

The membership figures are up from March last year, which was an extraordinary year due to Covid and many members not renewing until they met again in person in the Autumn of 2022. Renewals are still coming in and there are more independent members registering this year.

Regional Secretaries have been sent information relating to teams that have not registered again this year. John Willis was thanked by Diane Holt for his help with the membership renewal process.

TW has asked us to challenge the view that paying £12 to register with the HRGB is not worth it. It was suggested that paper 13 should be sent to Regional Secretaries and Regional Newsletter Editors, to highlight the benefits of HRGB membership.

14. Sales Update, paper 14.

John Willis stated that online sales had recovered well despite the postal strikes. The Bedford and HRGB Music Scheme titles are available for downloading free of charge, as previously agreed by the NEC. The family of the late Bill Butler, has agreed to donate the books to HRGB and Bill's books will be available for sale through HRGB.

There will be a limited sales presence at the National Rally in Stirling, but offers of help have been forthcoming from DH and also the Scottish region.

15. Website and database update, paper 15.

The Remembering Ryan Price event to be hosted by the SW region on 9th September 2023, and inviting other regions to join, will be included on the website.

There may need to be a review of our operating system in about five years' time JW stated.

16. Social Media Update

MW reported the following:

Twitter— 260 followers (up 9 since March 2022)

Facebook— 831 followers (up 218 since March 2022)

Instagram—229 followers (up 18 since March 2022)

YouTube—47 subscribers (up 5 since March 2022)

A plea for help has been made by MW.

He was thanked for all his hard work on our behalf.

17. Reverberations, paper 17.

The paragraph in italics where a member has asked not to be sent Reverberations, was mentioned. Perhaps this was received from a member who has to be an HRGB member under the terms of the team constitution?

There was a discussion of whether the size, quality and frequency of Reverberations should change. If Reverberations is taken away, perhaps that will upset some members. The magazine is excellent in quality and JW was thanked for continuing to be Editor. Please will NEC members continue to try to find a replacement Editor.

JG showed an example of the Recorder Magazine, which is A4 in size and contains sheet music in the centre pages. Membership of the Society of Recorder Players (SRP) is £25 from HQ plus the fee charged by Regional Branches, £23 in the case of Lincoln SRP, making annual membership of £48 pa. Associate membership of another branch is available and the Sheffield branch of SRP charges £18, for example. The Recorder Magazine contains branch news, adverts, articles about new music, and is produced once a quarter. The SRP also produces a Membership booklet publicising every member's name, address, telephone number and home branch. Potentially a GDPR nightmare BUT every member is asked if they wish to appear in the booklet and has the option not to have their personal details published.

18. Archives, paper 18

The exhibition in June was highlighted and has been given the title of "Handbells: Wondrous Little Vehicles of Sound", based on a quotation from an article about a performance in Huddersfield in the 1860s. Heritage Quay has found other articles of interest relating to handbells, in their own archives. AH will be visiting Heritage Quay on his way back from the National Rally, in order to leave additional material which includes the latest issues of regional magazines and newsletters.

19. WHMF, paper 19

Proposal 1: The Standing Committee requests confirmation from the NEC for their decision to lend £3000 to Heydon Handbell Ringers in order to purchase three octaves of Malmark handbells. **Carried**

Proposal 2: The standing committee requests authorisation from the NEC to support the disposition of the Collings handbells by whichever route meets the capabilities of the HRGB member concerned, without detriment to the finances of HRGB. **Carried**

The bass octave of the Collings bells is currently on loan to TW but will be returned soon. The cost of storing these bells would be in the region of £120 every four weeks. There are three boxes of bells measuring 3'x 2' x 18", B3 to C3, which Alan H will photograph. Anthony H has offered to store all three boxes in his home, if needed. JG suggested three people could perhaps store a box each.

AH requested authorisation from the NEC to the leasing of a storage facility at a current cost of £120 per 4 week period for the storage of WHMF bells where other facilities are not available. This was approved

20. Matters arising from last meeting

None

21. Correspondence

An e mail from Sandra Winter was read out.

“There have been thirty nine contact messages via the website, and two letters since January.

The majority have been membership enquiries, particularly about renewals, and requests for valuations and advice about selling bells. I’m grateful to everyone who has helped out with answers to all these!”

JW highlighted an e mail he circulated from Balens who are pulling out of the handbell insurance market. Music Guard will be taking over and JW tried to get a quotation but the valuation on the site would not go high enough.

TW cautioned the NEC about recommending any specific company, although it is helpful to members to provide a list of possibilities. RL has just renewed his insurance with Balens, AC found the insurance premium was too high and insured with Allianz.

TW screen shared a card that had been received from King Charles III following our letter to him upon the death of HM Queen Elizabeth 11. The card will be published in Reverberations in the Autumn.

22. HRGB Diary Dates

As published on the HRGB website and updated by JW.

23. AOB

Any changes to officers should be reported to JG who will advise JW and AH to allow details to be updated in Reverberations and the Accounts, where necessary.

24 Date of next meeting : 1st July 2023 on zoom, and suggestions for agenda items. (Item 11 has been carried forward).

25. Valette

Tim said his farewells as this is the last NEC meeting that he will chair. He thanked the NEC for the enjoyable, friendly support he has received over the nine years he has been Chair of HRGB.

He commented that it was wonderful that the HRGB has twenty Trustees who wish to help HRGB to grow and develop in the future.

John Atkinson thanked Tim for his good humour, grace and wise words which have been much appreciated. The good ship The NEC has been a difficult ship to steer.....and Tim will buy the drinks at the National Rally!

Individuals thanked Tim as they left and the meeting ended at 4.35pm.

Judy Gees