

Dear DA and Section Secretaries,

### Policy Handbook Consultation

We are grateful for the feedback you have sent us. There has been some really helpful advice, questions we need to answer and points you feel need clarification. Overall I am pleased by the level of support expressed for getting our procedures sorted out; we do recognise that it is long overdue.

One of the difficulties in a National document is recognising the breadth of experiences met by a large number of diverse groups. Some of you may never come across specific situations that need clear advice, while others need detailed guidance for their own particular case which has no precedent locally.

We are trying to give autonomy and responsibility for specific local needs, but need to acknowledge the overall legal and administrative requirements as well. As this is a policy document we have had to cover circumstances that have arisen in local groups that have shown significant gaps in our current policies or rules. Most of these are dealt with privately and sensitively so we do not need to cover the background here. Yet we have to be prepared, to protect you as volunteers and show CTC is responsible and supportive.

We are cycling in a changing world and need to maintain the traditions of CTC, while welcoming new cyclists and the new groups they might form in CTC.

On the attached pages we have summarised the most important points that have come out of the consultation process and the response of the group managing this process through to implementation on behalf of council. There are some other individual points that were only raised by one person, sometimes in the form of a question; we will come back to you individually about those in the coming weeks.

Our timetable now is to incorporate your useful feedback and prepare the updated version of the policy handbook for implementation from this autumn.

Yours sincerely

Jill Kieran  
Chair of Council  
Co-ordinator of Local Groups Steering Committee

**Consultation on CTC Local Groups Policy Handbook**  
**Summary of Responses, August 2007.**

Main issues arising in responses.

1. Definitions and requirements of Sections
2. Welfare officer
3. Committee positions and roles.
4. Drafting
5. Committee numbers
6. Organising committees
7. Timetable
8. Onerous Duties
9. Need to change?
10. Access by public transport to meetings

**1. Definitions and requirements of Sections**

This was by far the biggest area of comment in the consultation and stretched across many of the topics mentioned in the list above.

The problem appears to have arisen because of the huge diversity in the groups that call themselves 'sections'. Our biggest sections are clearly large and active cycling clubs in their own right, and in quite a few cases the DA barely exists except as an occasional liaison group for the sections.

At the other extreme sections are in fact just a handful of people meeting for rides, often quite informally. Rightly concerns were raised in the consultation responses about these small sections facing difficulty in meeting the minimum requirements for member groups.

National Council has also had to deal with an increasing proportion of local groups complaints focussing on sections. The lack of accountability for sections and their status has hampered our ability to deal effectively with issues raised by members or in disputes between sections and their DAs.

Our recommendation is that sections should be able to choose where they fit into the organisation. A cycling group holding members' money, issuing publications and providing big programmes of events or rides is de facto operating at the level of many DAs and has to fit within our policy frameworks. A section choosing to become a member group will need to follow all of the requirements in the Policy Handbook for member groups (as will all DAs).

If existing sections are happy to rely on their DA for their bureaucracy and their accountability to members then we agree that they should not be subject to the full reach of the club's policies. We will therefore add an additional definition in the policy handbook called 'informal groups' rather than 'sections'.

We will word a definition which will suggest that if a section becomes an informal group, following requirements for member groups is not necessary, but in these cases the DA must assume responsibility for formal administration of the informal group.

This is the issue that sections should consider most urgently before their AGMs, which form do they wish to take in the future – formal or informal?

## **2. Welfare officer**

Clarity about this suggestion was requested.

There is clear evidence that our groups often lack someone to support members who may have concerns about joining the club, their own contribution, how to fit in or in the worst case have grievances about how they are treated by the club or individuals. Having a plan for welcoming new members or volunteers is a clear need.

The Secretary has a first commitment to the group membership and to the policies of CTC; it is often very difficult to play a welfare role as well, although many do a great job in this capacity.

We believe some of the complaints and issues we see referred to national office or councillors would have been helped if the local group had someone nominated to look out for individual welfare issues as they arise.

We do not believe that there is a formal need for qualifications in this role but we agree with those who have suggested that guidance should be provided for the welfare role and we will investigate the availability of training.

We do not believe that the committee needs to appoint a distinctive post called Welfare Officer, what we propose is that someone on the committee other than the Secretary is asked to address the issue of “welfare” as a topic, and to receive advice on relevant issues when available to groups.

## **3. Committee positions and roles.**

The need for the posts specified has been queried.

We have recognised this as an issue for sections and offered a solution in point 1.

More generally good practise suggests a team of three leading officers ensures that decisions are democratic and provides support for volunteers taking responsibility for a group. It helps continuity too, as so many groups are relying on perhaps one person and if they are unable to continue problems arise.

- Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer are the suggested obligatory committee positions – covering the main issues of democracy and rules, of administration/policy and of finance.
- The other duties we specify for a group committee; registration, welfare and promotion, could if possible be filled by three separate people, however if this is not possible, then the three obligatory officers may wish to take on these roles.
- Other posts are clearly to suit your local needs.

## **4. Drafting**

We agree with many of you who felt the consultation version was poorly drafted. We recognise that we brought together parts drawn from a number of authors and time periods which was clumsy. The Policy Handbook will be reviewed to improve the language and clarity of the final draft and we may well use an external author to finish it off if that will help.

## **5. Committee numbers**

The requirement of between 5 and 12 committee members will be changed from a policy to a guideline, with the caveat that informal groups will not need committees. In general there will be more clarity in the Handbook as to what Policies are mandatory and which are guidelines.

## **6. Organising committees.**

Several questions about this new term. For clarity these are NOT any form of existing member group. These are committees that come together for a specific purpose or cause, for example the York Rally Committee.

## **7. Timetable**

There have been several comments about the timetable, from long overdue to needing more time.

We have decided that the timetable will be continued as published.

We do this because:

- Some changes are required by law or regulation, and we must move them forward.
- We have consulted on these topics three times in two years; these proposals are just the summary of what you have already seen and your feedback.
- We do not expect significant change in the majority of groups
- Implementation will take some time
- The next opportunity to make such changes will not be until autumn 2008 if we miss this year.

However in respect of these changes we recognise the points made and we suggest:

- There can be a transition period to implement any changes needed, they do not have to start immediately after your AGM.
- Sections can act as informal groups (1 above)

The other important point we want to stress is that we never want to end up with a 30 year old handbook again. Each section of the policy handbook will be reviewed and updated as needed, if certain parts become outdated we commit to an ongoing process.

Council is grateful for the contribution of the Local Groups Steering Group made up of experienced local group representatives who have volunteered in updating parts of the local groups toolkit. The group provides an opportunity for those with time or an interest to make suggestions on policy. It is mainly email based, and Jill Kieran is currently the

contact point. We would really welcome the input from others who have responded to this consultation in working with this group.

## **8. Onerous Duties**

It is suggested that some of the policy suggestions are too onerous.

- We agree as far as small sections are concerned (see point 1)
- Otherwise the policies in the handbook attempt only to cover situations that have arisen previously or been requested by groups, or are necessary as part of the duty of care of the CTC to its members (including groups) as a limited company.

Our view as a Council is that we do this work so you don't have to.

## **9. Need to change?**

There were a few questions about the need for change.

- Some change is essential due to external changes.
- The use of the terms section and DA are being changed to terms that are more understandable to the non-CTC public.

However if your group is stable, well organised, without issues or disputes, implementing the Policy framework leaves your group largely unchanged, but you may find this useful in the future if your situation changes.

## **10. Access by public transport to meetings**

We recognise that this may be an issue for some groups. It is now a legal requirement that CTC must ensure that its activities provide equal opportunity. At the very least groups must demonstrate that they have attempted to provide a meeting venue with access by public transport or for persons with limited mobility.

While groups have not had to consider this before it may appear quite challenging but it is something we can introduce gradually up to the point where inaccessible venues are generally phased out.