

WEST SUSSEX DA. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON FINAL DRAFT OF MEMBER GROUPS POLICY HANDBOOK AND COMMENTS ON TOOLKIT DOCUMENTATION

A) CONSULTATION

1. Length and adequacy of consultation

The final draft of the policy Handbook is referred to as being "our proposals." meaning the proposals of all the DA's to which it will apply. This is not really appropriate. The outline of the proposals were sent to DAs in 2005 but at that time there was no draft of the proposed policy Handbook. The outline proposals were drafted by HQ and input since the initial 2005 consultation has been limited to those DA's who had members with the time to attend the local group's conference, and the even smaller number able to take part in the local groups steering group. There has been no regular updating of all the DA's in the country of the progress of the proposals, and in particular, no earlier draft of the policy Handbook has been supplied to all the DA's and the first many were aware of this was when a copy of the final draft was sent out at the end of June this year, with only a month given for consultation on that draft. That one-month period was during holidays, with most DA's and Sections, unable to arrange committee meetings to fully discuss the proposals. There was no consultation at all on the introduction of entry forms for guests on ordinary club rides or the requirement for taking of CTC membership numbers at the start of all club rides.

2. Proposals for extended consultation

In the circumstances, we consider that the current proposal that the policy Handbook be adopted at the upcoming AGMs in October and November of this year leaves insufficient time for proper consultation. We propose that the time for DA's and Sections to adopt the new policy Handbook, should be extended by one year to the AGMs in 2008 with implementation to take place from January 2009 onwards. We propose that the period for consultation on the policy Handbook, should be extended to the 1 July 2008. This would then give much more time for DA's and Sections to consider the final version of the Handbook and decide how that will be implemented in relation to their particular organisation and whether they required any additional rules. We propose that during the extended consultation period, each revised draft of the Handbook should be e-mailed to DA and Section secretaries, to enable further consideration and comments to be made before the final draft is completed by the first of July next year.

B) POLICY HANDBOOK RESPONSE

(1) Current position of the West Sussex DA

Many concerns arise as to the extent to which the new system could mean additional administrative burdens on the Sections which are currently dealt with by the DA. The West Sussex DA and its Sections, is currently organised as essentially independent Sections supervised by a DA, which takes on some of the administrative burdens of dealing with HQ such as the annual report and membership registration and the DA also deals with inter-Section DA events and the DA magazine and a Combined rides list.

(2) Group Membership: Member Groups (P12)

With the new provisions it will mean that we can either operate as totally independent Sections, or as a parent group. "The DA." With subsidiary member groups (Sections). It is probable that the DA and Sections will adopt the latter provisions. I note that in this situation the Sections would still be deemed to be separate member groups. I note at page 12 of the handbook it is stated that a CTC member must decide which is their main group, and they will then only be able to vote at the general meetings of that group. There is an exception to this in that if the member chooses a Section as their main group they will also have a main membership of the parent member group or DA. There is scope for confusion here as a member who belongs to the DA and is a Section member could choose the DA as their main group, and

then be in a position that they are not able to vote in the Sections AGM. The policy Handbook should be clarified and confirm that if a member elects the DA as their main group in this situation where the DA is the parent group of a number of Sections that the members would also have main membership of one Section of the DA and be able to vote at the AGM of that Section as well as the DA. This is of particular importance because the procedure as outlined seems to indicate that the default member group to which a member is allocated will be the DA of their residential postcode so the problem outlined will apply in nearly all cases. Under the procedure the member will have to make a special effort to contact the membership department to nominate or change their selection of main membership and in practice to be realistic most members are not going to bother.

Although the existing policy Handbook does provide that if the member chooses a Section as their main membership they will also have main membership of the parent member group there is no clarification of what happens in these circumstances to the claim for the subscription levy.

The finances of the DA and the Sections are fairly stable at the moment, and everybody knows where they stand. The DA receives the subscription allocation grant and some of this is used to fund the regular expenses of the DA, such as website expenses, hire of the hall for the AGM and a subsidy to the Sections of the cost to them of the DA magazine. With the new procedure, there is scope for this whole structure to be thrown into confusion. If some members choose the Section as their main group the subscription levy for that member will be paid to the Section and if some members choose the DA as their main group the subscription Levy will be paid to the DA. We would suggest that in a situation where there is a DA and subsidiary member groups or Sections, with members main member groups being both the DA and one Section the policy Handbook should be clarified to confirm that the subscription levy is always claimable by the DA.

We are concerned that over the years that has been much work in the determination of the boundaries of DA's. In the case of West Sussex, many of the postcodes originate outside the County boundaries in Hampshire Surrey or East Sussex. There is a reference to this under member groups at page 12. But we would like further clarification added by the addition at the end of the last paragraph of member groups on page 12 of the words "and their existing boundaries"

Member groups are required at page 10 to define an area of operation. If we are required to do this it would assist if all DA's could be supplied either with a map showing the current boundaries if available or at the very least, a full listing of all postcodes which are currently registered with HQ as being included within the boundaries of the DA.

(3) Formal Procedures: Meetings. Procedure at general meetings (P14)

The requirement that meetings must always be accessible by public transport is unnecessary and inappropriate for a small cycling group. In our case for the DA AGM and the AGM of some Sections the meetings have always been held in the middle of a Sunday ride which gains the best possible attendance. In the case of a DA such as ours covering a large geographical area the location of the AGM is constrained by the need to hold it in a central location. Holding the AGM in a busy town with public transport would make it less attractive for persons wishing to attend by bicycle.

The requirement that admission to a general meeting is only obtainable on production of a member's current membership card is bureaucratic and places an unnecessary extra burden on volunteers to check cards and an unnecessary burden on members to try and remember to bring their membership card. The normal procedure which we adopt at meetings is that all those attending sign on a sheet which goes round and the Registrar could readily check those names against the members register. There would seem to be no reason why for a small group non members could not attend as non-voting guests.

The provision that any business done at a general meeting, with less than 10 members present, is subject to ratification by the Council is inappropriate in the new provisions. This provision has just been taken without change from the old Handbook. In the old Handbook the compulsory requirement for an AGM only applied to a DA, rather than a Section. Under the new provisions, Sections are member groups and

must hold an AGM. Many Sections have much smaller numbers than a DA, and there will be many situations where less than 10 members will attend a Section AGM.

(4) Formal procedures. Committees

(a) Chairman

The new provisions indicate that there must now be an obligatory Chairman for each group in addition to a Secretary and Treasurer. Sections and DA's find it increasingly difficult to fill all of the posts for officers. The addition of a Chairman will make this even more difficult. In our case, the DA and the Sections have not previously had a permanent Chairman, but have elected a Chairman at each meeting as needed. The policy Handbook should be amended to remove the requirement for a permanent obligatory Chairman. But if this has to remain, the policy Handbook should be amended to provide that the Chairman could be the same person as another officer, such as the Secretary or the Treasurer.

(b) Group Secretary

The Secretary's job description should require that the Secretary arranges for the preparation of minutes, not that the Secretary, in person, is required to prepare them. Illness holidays and other circumstances, often require others to step in.

(c) Local group Registrar.

To avoid the need for unnecessary duplication and difficulty in filling this post where there is a DA and subsidiary member groups or Sections the policy Handbook should be amended to make clear there can be just one Registrar, who will be Registrar for both the DA and its subsidiary groups whether or not the person named as Registrar is a member of all of those subsidiary groups.

(d) Welfare and Promotion

The requirement that every DA and every one of the Sections must have a welfare and also a publicity/press officer is over the top for small groups. This could be dealt with either just at the DA level or be an area to be dealt with by the Committee as a whole as and when required.

(e) Reporting

Under the present provisions, the DA Secretary receives the end of year pack and sends up the end of year report on behalf of the DA and the Sections. In the situation where there is a DA and subsidiary member groups or Sections under the new provisions, the policy Handbook should be amended. This should make clear that one end of year report and questionnaire can be submitted by the parent member group or DA on behalf of the DA and all the Sections or subsidiary member groups.

(4) Formal Procedures. Financial

(a) Local Funds.

The requirement that authority to operate the bank account shall be vested in three members of the committee is inappropriate and unnecessarily unwieldy for a small group. A more appropriate provision would be that the operation of the bank should be in the name of at least two members of the committee and up to three.

Provision should be made for the name on a Bank Account to be shortened where appropriate. For example the new full name for the Bognor Regis and Chichester Section may be "CTC West Sussex,

Bognor Regis and Chichester Group” This is very long for a cheque so could be shortened in the title of the Bank Account to CTC Bognor and Chichester

(b) Auditing Accounts

The requirement that all cheque payments should be matched with the returned cheques is out of date and has presumably been taken from previous guidance. Cheques are no longer returned by banks and can only be obtained by expensive special order.

4. Comments and proposals on documentation

(a) Ride entry forms.

We are very concerned about the recent introduction of additional administrative burdens required at the start of every ride. The entry form and the insurance guidelines seem to indicate that these apply to every ride organised by a DA or Section, whether or not it is a special event. First there is a requirement that insurance is only provided if the leader is aware of all participants on the ride either through collection of name and CTC membership number or by completion of an entry form. For a number of reasons, this is going to be completely impracticable. First, as many rides are going to be organised by a Section, it will not always be possible for a committee member or officer to be present. If only the registered ride leader is present without any officers or committee members it really is an unreasonable burden to impose upon ride leaders. They will have to have with them Entry forms in case any non CTC member turns up, and will also have to know whether that non CTC member has previously been on five or more rides, which they are not going to know. The members who do turn up for the ride will be expected to have with them a note of their CTC membership number, which is unlikely. Most of the rides which take place are relatively small with numbers of between 4 and 10, and this level of bureaucracy is totally unreasonable.

With regard to CTC membership numbers the ride leader is going to know the people who turn up. Can you please advise whether this requirement can be dealt with by the names of members on the ride being matched later to the numbers, by the registrar in the event of an incident?

We are not sure of the extent to which this introduction of bureaucracy into ordinary club rides has been thought through. Very often members will join part way through a ride either on the road or at elevenses or lunch. If somebody joins the ride on the road is the leader really going to be required to stop the ride and obtain the Riders membership number or if it is a guest rider, require them to complete an entry form!! CTC rides are not like Audax events or other large cycling events, where there is a fixed start place and usually a hall is hired. Start points will often be in the open at a convenient location often next to a road. What happens if it rains and the ink on the forms starts to run!

The same kind of objection applies to medium level Special Events. An example of this would be a freewheeling competition between the three sections of our DA, with 20 members attending. The meeting point at such an event would be at the top of a convenient hill in the open. Under the new procedures, because it is a special event all members would be expected to complete entry forms, which would require that these be handed round, together with pens and also something to rest the paper on.

CTC should really be cautious that it does not overburden members and volunteers to such an extent that volunteers are just not going to come forward and members are going to feel that it is better to operate as an independent club, without the bureaucracy. If volunteers find it is too heavy a burden they are not going to come forward and the end result is going to be a large loss of membership at grassroots level.

The previous position until the ride entry form was brought in this year, was that entry forms were only required for guest members on special events. Could we please be informed why this change has been deemed necessary? Has the change been brought in at the instance of CTC, or is it a new requirement of the insurance company. If it is the former we would ask that the provision be reconsidered, and if it is the latter we would ask that either representations are made to the Insurers to the effect that the requirements

are unreasonable for the size and type of ride involved or that CTC make enquiries of other insurers as to their requirements in these circumstances.

(b) Risk Assessment Forms.

We would raise concerns as to the circumstances in which the risk assessment form can be deemed to be required. Many of the events referred to in the guidance note in the first paragraph of the form will be one-off once a year events and it may well be feasible to complete risk assessments in those cases. We would raise concerns, however at the reference to off-road rides. Several of the Sections of this DA hold regular fortnightly off-road rides. Proper completion of a Risk Assessment Form requires the route to be checked in advance. It is simply not feasible or reasonable for the ride leader to be required to check an off-road route and complete a risk assessment form for an ordinary club ride which will probably only attract three or four people.

The reference to whole weekend rides or longer, is also of considerable concern. Many Sections of our DA organise two or three day Youth hostelling or bed-and-breakfast weekends. These will often involve travel by car or train some distance away to explore new routes and the organiser will make use of maps to plan such routes, which will not have been seen in advance. Numbers taking part will often be in the region of four or five. In these circumstances, the idea that an organiser would be expected to travel some distance and check out each day's route and complete a risk assessment form is totally unreasonable and would make such an event impossible to organise.

The guidance should be amended to exclude both off-road rides and whole weekend rides or longer which are standard Club Rides or holidays and are not special events from the requirement that a risk assessment be carried out.

This response has been agreed and approved by the Committee of the West Sussex DA.

Regards,

Edwin Jones.
West Sussex DA Secretary