Minutes from “Future of Borders Exploration Group” committee/members meeting

22nd August 2017

Present:

* Rosie Stewart
* Jono Ellis
* Ron Sutherland
* Geraldine Bouglas
* Graham Little
* Pam Hunter
* Nancy Anderson
* Richard Forsyth
* Ruth Longmuir
* Jim MacPherson
* Lucy Forsyth
* Alison Forsyth
* Craig Forsyth
* Rachel Nuttall
* Mark Graham
* Rowena Miller
* Sarah McLaren
* Michael Strang Steel
* Kieron Riddell
* Nicola Stillie
* Roger Hemming
* Euan Briggs
* Sophie Wilson

Apologies:

* Louise Runciman

Rosie – opening remarks about history of BEG, 19 successful expeditions, focus of the evening is looking to the future and to BEG’s current problems. Why have this discussion now? No active trips – Bolivia has just returned and the next trip (to Malawi) has only just begun preparations. BEG equipment store will need to be moved very soon – new stores will have a cost commitment. If we continue we will be continuing with this new cost.

Another issue is the fact that come the next AGM only two committee members are expected to remain on the committee and new committee members have been hard to find in recent years.

**Premises**

Issue is that West Morriston is no longer a long term solution – it’s not an ideal building (damp and deteriorating) and not an ideal place to store equipment. Fortunate to have had this space for free for so long. We’ve known about this for a long time and have sourced a potential solution in the potential for taking on the lease for the Tweed Valley Mountain Rescue premises – will definitely involve paying rent, gas, electricity, repairs and insurance -possibly approximately £1,000 to £1,500 with only a notional rent from Scottish Borders Council. If this doesn’t come off there are still other options – storage units.

Michael Strang Steel – how big a building do we need? < Suggests Prieston Farm – for tents and other equipment. Maybe the size of two double garages. MSS willing to show people round and there’s a potential solution there.

?? - suggestion of buying a shipping container – definitely an option but would require somewhere to put it.

**Increasing costs**

2016/2017 year has not been a good year for increasing costs for BEG. Main reason is from insurance. £290 Youth Scotland insurance didn’t cover us whilst abroad – very hard to find someone who was willing to insure BEG and we were being considered in the same category as tour operator Thomas Cook. We’re an unusual group so we’re high risk so premium was £3,500 for the year.

Medics/doctors have been increasingly hard to find which has meant that we have had to pay some of the cost for doctors going on the two most recent trips.

Premises (as above).

Accounts (available as needed) – available monies down from £7,000 at start of year to £1,500. Funding gap of £4,000 per year. Adding insurance costs to expedition costs adds between £100 and £200 to individual costs. Maybe wouldn’t make such a huge difference if we tried to bring costs of expeditions (especially flights) down.

We’ve found other ways to source medics and also have more on our books (but some may require some supplemental costs to cover their costs).

That doesn’t leave any fundraising for BEG. Tower Trophy used to run every 2 years, hasn’t run in \_\_ years. Fundraising could have an impact on local community but provided enough people are interested in keeping BEG going then it shouldn’t have too big an impact. Riddle Estate has been offered as a potential fundraising place for BEG and ?? Riddell’s daughter is interested in being involved in this.

Graham Little - question about bequeathing money from people’s wills. General issue is that we are aimed at younger people. Grant funding also considered but tend to be for specific projects. Potential there for things like solar panels – we’ve never really had to consider this before.

**Risk Environment**

Risk maybe hasn’t changed but our awareness to this has increased (as trustees). Because we’re purely a charity (not incorporated as a company) the committee are individually responsible and liable (financially and criminally). At the moment – because we are running such a slim committee with too few people on the committee we are at risk. Training to leaders not strong enough. Child Protection has been under discussion for the past two years. Trying to get all Bolivia leaders all PVG checked – one only had it on the day of departure. Easy(easier) to do if it’s your job but not if you’re volunteers. Leaders have higher awareness about risk and expect answers from committee but we don’t have policies for all of these things. This ties back in to the need for increased insurance. We do have a suite of procedures and policies but legislation changes around data protection are things that we haven’t fully explored. This means that committee meetings aren’t as fun as we’d like them to be as we have to focus on policy things. None of us are experts and we’re all trying to find our way – would be much better with more experienced people on the committee. Rosie contacted other groups about medics and found that other groups have disbanded due to this increased level of risk.

What can we do? Possible to incorporate as a company (Charitable company limited by guarantee) – increases reporting but limits liability. Reassuring from a personal level but doesn’t mean that we’ve covered the risks. Would need to register with Companies House as well as OSCR. Requires people to be on the committee to be interested in this and be prepared to be on the committee.

Most policies now written up and just need to be put in place with the next expedition.

Increased awareness does reduce exposure.

Geraldine – would this impact on our ability to recruit leaders? We’d need to make them more aware of our awareness.

Rosie – perhaps with more organisation will be more reassuring. We’d hopefully be encouraging to leaders.

G – if committee moves on then that knowledge moves on with them.

R – would need to induct new committee.

Pam – other organisations have huge documentation/policy that you sign before you leave.

R – Looked at Raleigh International’s one to use as a template. Also worked with YET over the past year. Checklist for people before expedition is an idea and also part of the insurance process. Insurance form raised some things that we hadn’t thought of and could put in place.

Roger Hemming – has BEG built up legal connections over the past few years?

R – we’ve built up connections but most linked to committee. We need a more diverse committee over the years.

Nancy - we need more than contacts – we need people with experience. With the contact that we had we were told that Youth Borders insurance was sufficient.

R – we need more than just goodwill from people, we need their expertise on the committee.

MSS – Gavin Kellit – works for Eco Safety. Might be interested in BEG and might have skills we need.

R - committee recruitment has largely been at our own meetings and events, other charities advertise online and in the news for charity trustees and lots of charities are having the same issues.

Pam – we’re paying for medics, given the importance of lawyers maybe this is a skill that we need to pay for.

R – agree. Would be foolish to think BEG could continue without legal support and risk mediation in place.

**Expeditions**

Very few difficulties here overall.

Bolivia expedition pushed back a year because we couldn’t find right calibre of leaders. Malawi only had one applicant.

Medics (as above). Very close to having to cancel trips due to lack of medics.

Cost for Peru £1,750 then, £2,200 now.

People lose enthusiasm – it’s a huge amount of work. It ends up being every weekend, evenings and at-work time. Once expedition is over they don’t want anything to do with BEG anymore. Not all people but most.

Geraldine – do sometimes come back later – need a break.

R – How do we appeal to other types of venturers? Lots of commentary about other similar exped groups and how sustainable their work abroad is. How do we measure our long-term sustainability? We know that we could be involved in expeditions to areas where something is already established. We know that expeditions can change lives of leaders and venturers. Would be great if we could appeal to other types of venturers – perhaps those who might find it harder to fundraise.

Excited about potential for Malawi in partnering with an existing organisation and to a country we’ve already been to. What is months and months of prep would be slightly easier.

Cheaper destinations so that insurance and medical costs can be incorporated into expedition costs.

Article in Border Telegraph generated lots of interest. We can take more advantage of advertising but requires more people on committee to do this. Expeditions are the reason we’re here.

Roger – what’s the trend been from people applying to expeditions?

R – Malawi 60 applicants. Bolivia – 30 applicants. Austria in between – Europe tends to be less popular. Generally people who apply could go to Europe if they want to. Recruitment of venturers not really a problem. Hawick venturers no longer apply as they have alternatives within the school.

RH – has there been a change in average age of applicants?

R – no – most are 5th and 6th year. How do we get out of that market? We looked to part fund some places.

GL – geographical skew to central Borders. Little interest from Peebles, etc. Are we getting the message across to the whole of the Borders?

NA – we did two information evenings in Peebles. Some schools are just better at promoting within the school. Both Bolivia evenings poorly attended in Peebles.

R – also the sibling effect of bringing people back.

Ron – effect of teachers who worked in those schools.

R – as a full time worker it’s hard to be at a school at 3pm to give a presentation.

Mark Graham - age difference between venturers who’ve left school and young leaders was very small. Older venturers don’t want to be told what to do in the same way as school pupils.

Rachel N – venturers are the future of BEG and transferring the skills to them is vital for the future of BEG.

R – need the balance between those who have teacher skills and venturers

Mark Graham – importance of social media in promotion. Instagram for example. Why don’t people take their phones with them?

RN – potential for generating interest through sharing from trips – shared iPad?

Ron Sutherland – Don’t think that we haven’t considered it. Need to control flow of information back to home. That’s the reason for that.

RN - Shared resource, could be monitored could work.

GB – Austria, Zambia, etc. tried this.

Ron – remember that I’m in my 60s – we need to have younger people on committee helping with this.

JMcP – example of trip on Monday where a text was sent about someone capsized and within 10 minutes people had been calling the school.

**Volunteers**

R – biggest area of risk. Out of 10 people on committee, only 4 regularly attend. Often not quorate. Leads to doing things by email. Only able to dedicate so much time to BEG. Only 3 willing to stay on committee next year. Next year there will be no chair, treasurer or secretary. People this year less willing to volunteer for roles – no secretary this year and sharing the role. This maybe leads to people being more reluctant.

No-one volunteers for anything. Not just the committee but the whole of BEG. Very few replies. “BEG did so much for me, such a great organisation, but I’m too busy.” Very disheartening. Possible that there are loads of people out there – we don’t need short term expedition support, we need long-term committee experience. This is where we need to decide tonight where we need to go from here. Are there people in the room who are willing to be on the committee?

JMcP – over the past 10 years or so we’ve had similar meetings to this. Each time we’ve had a couple people who’ve committed for a couple of years. People we need to think about the longer term.

Richard Forsyth – has insurance company and is willing to share time and would allow people to drop in and out over time.

MG – two choices – stop or innovate.

R – agree but who’s going to innovate. But who? Only had 3 emails about tonight from people – indicative that there’s no outside interest right now of people wanting to get involved.

GB – huge network of people who know about this. Victim of own success – we’ve encouraged people to spread their wings and they have.

Roger – 25 committeed members who renew each year. Up to 45 this year as it’s an exped year. Don’t even pay £10 year after BEG.

MG – Is there an option to get college involved?

NA – another good idea. But still need strong core committee to do that. Without an active committee we can’t drive that forward.

GL – I know that we do promotion. What’s our USP? What’s so special about BEG? More feedback from venturers themselves. Need more feedback onto the BEG website. Would love to ask people what their experience was.

R – Austria trip first time we did evaluation forms as it was a fairly established leader group. Hard even to get group back to write report. Malawi report just 3 years after trip.

Rachel N – going to offer to commit to BEG.

Roger – if there are no chair, secretary or treasurer are people who’ve held those roles willing to be mentors? 3 month handover?

R – Yes – think’s that is a good suggestion. Came to chair without that mentor. Happy to mentor as chair or treasurer and thinks some others would be willing to do that.

GL – Malawi trip on hold due to lack of leader applications. If we don’t hear about BEG until November then it’s troubling for the expedition.

R – that’s why we’re here tonight. Think it’s important to make those decisions tonight.

MSS – Scouts are in a similar position. Lots of other organisations. Cadets, schools, etc. Might have someone who’s able to be a chair in mind. Already spoken to them about District Commissioner for Scouts and may be a partial solution. Thinks it’s a great organisation and it would be a shame.

R – Asks if anyone else is willing to be on the committee.

?? – Asks for practicalities of the committee – not willing to commit without knowing what to expect.

R – meets every 6 weeks with a break in summer. Tends to meet centrally in Borders. Tends to be 2 to 2.5 hours. Update on current trip normally. Update on money. This year we’ve discussed premesis, child protection, data protection, roles of committee, insurance, roles of leader team, fundraising, courses for child protection, recruiting doctors, membership.

GB – lots of tasks to take away, can’t do all that over the 7 meetings. Core committee members have a much bigger role to take on. Is a lot of work.

R – time over the past year is roughly 10 to 15 hours on BEG, more than anybody else.

NA – reality is the risk society that we’re in. That has increased over the past while.

R – estimate that committee members should spend 1-2 hours per week.

NA – time spent PVG, chasing Youth Borders, etc. Will stay on to do this next year but soley for that. Demands are changing.

Ron – fundraising needs to be a big focus. Everything done will need to be updated and reviewed over the time.

**Willing to come on to committee:**

* Rachel Nuttall [rachelnuttall@williamlockie.com](mailto:rachelnuttall@williamlockie.com) (can’t make AGM as in Japan for work)
* Mairi Lawrie – [mairiclawrie@hotmail.com](mailto:mairiclawrie@hotmail.com)
* Adam Aitkin – [adamaitkin@yahoo.com](mailto:adamaitkin@yahoo.com)
* Richard Forsyth [Richard\_forsyth@nfumutual.co.uk](mailto:Richard_forsyth@nfumutual.co.uk) (can’t make 3rd Oct – meeting for work)
* Mark Graham [markg@emtelle.com](mailto:markg@emtelle.com)
* Euan Briggs
* Graham Little – willing to stay on
* Lucy Forsyth [lucyf0207@icloud.com](mailto:lucyf0207@icloud.com)
* Sophie Wilson
* Keiren Riddell – willing to stay on
* Nancy Anderson – happy to stay on as PVG person [nancyhaggis@aol.com](mailto:nancyhaggis@aol.com)
* Nicola Stille – happy to stay on as treasurer

Roger – can we share AGM widely – newspapers etc. Is there potential for WhatsApp?

R – mailing list to 300ish, Facebook feor 400ish. That’s really what Facebook is for – reach. Share amongst others.

Ron – we’ve used Skype to get people who can’t attend

R – quite a few people in our committee live in Edinburgh.

MSS – will we present about Boliva?

R – yes.

Rachel N – AGM in November? Can people who are interested come along to meeting before AGM?

R – I think that’s a great idea. 3rd October. If you’re keen to come to that meeting then come along then to be introduced to committee.

Roger – is there an existing PowerPoint about BEG?

R – yes. What there’s not really though is an introduction to the committee.

R – Great list of people but we need to have a chair. Committee of 12 should make role of chair much less daunting.

Ron S – would come to committee meetings as a non-committee meeting

JMcP – as Historical Advisors. (also volunteered).

GB – won’t abandon ship and will stay around to support committee.

NA – will stay on a year but after that will move on.

R – is anyone willing to put hand up to be chair?

Roger – is there a term of office? More appealing if it doesn’t feel like a life sentence.

R – two years?

JMcP – can we suggest waiting until 3rd Oct?

R – what happens if we can’t find a chair?

GL – willing to stand in if need-be.

RN – it’s daunting to be offering to be on committee never mind being chair. Couldn’t someone who’s on committee become chair?

GB – people need to be mindful of the presentation content – can PowerPoint circulate?

R – yes. Agree that to meet on 3rd Oct for both committee of 2016/17 and those who put their hands up.

JMcP – could we find someone who had role of chair without a role in BEG?

R – Recommending not to go on training team or ERG to limit role to Chair.

GB – requested BEG documentation be added and updated on BEG site.

R - both committees meet on 3rd. Nancy will kick off PVG

GB – committee not a closed shop – come along on 3rd Oct at Focus Centre.

AGM 14th November – Venue TBC

Rosie proposed, Jim seconded.

Ruth L – thanking Rosie for tonight and for the past year’s work.

Richard – offering NFU Mutual premises at Newton for future meetings (of up to 15 people).