

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR METAL DETECTING

Minutes of the NCMD Virtual Ordinary General Meeting (OGM) Sunday 28 February 2021

Attendees

Wendy Howard	Chair (acting)	Anglian Region
Alastair Hacket	President	Scottish Region
Kevin Gorman	General Secretary	North West Region
Hilary Fagen	Assistant General Secretary	North West Region
John Rigby	Membership Secretary	Central Register & Individual members
Siobhan Liehne	Treasurer	Scottish Region
Catherine Lange	Communications Officer	

Delegates

William Hargreaves	North West Region
Brian Pollard	SARA Representative

Apologies

Clive Coleman	Chair
Tommy Allinson	North East Region
Lesley Sleith	Scottish Region

The interests of individuals and clubs on the Central Register were represented by the General Secretary, Asst. General Secretary, and the Membership Secretary.

INTRODUCTION

It was confirmed that Wendy Howard would be acting chair on behalf of Clive Coleman who had sent his apologies.

It was requested that electronic copies of items discussed should be sent to both Kevin and Alison for inclusion in the minutes.

ACTION: All

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Wendy Howard (Acting Chair) opened the meeting and gave the apologies for absence as listed above.

2 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 2020 OGM

The minutes of the OGM held on Sunday 9 February 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

Proposed by Hilary Fagen - North West Region

Seconded by William Hargreaves - North West Region

Vote: Unanimous

3 MATTERS ARISING

Correction - The General Secretary noted that under item 6 of the previous minutes there was a reference stating that the NCMD membership fee is £6, and it should be £8.

4 REVIEW OF CORRESPONDENCE

The General Secretary gave a summary of some of the correspondence received since the last meeting.

Bequest

It was reported that £15,700 has been left to the NCMD as part of an Estate. All regions had been asked for opinions as to how best to use this windfall. Ideas from the regions who responded included:

A Starter Club for new starters to include training videos etc.

Funding school visits by NCMD members to enhance public opinion and give presentations about protecting the countryside as well as metal detecting.

Hilary Fagen agreed this was a good idea and would be happy to visit schools in the North West Region. Brian Pollard confirmed that he had already made numerous visits to local schools and it had never required much funding to carry out the visits.

Brian Pollard suggested educating the hobby regarding the increased health dangers and hazards faced by metal detectorists including soil borne diseases and ticks. Brian confirmed he had written articles on this topic in the past and it was agreed that Kevin Gorman would ask Brian for an article for Digging Deep later in the year. John Rigby suggested that this topic could also be included in training videos.

Catherine Lange suggested asking the NCMD general membership for their opinion and recommended a survey was sent out. It was agreed this was a good idea as it would give members a chance to be involved and for other options to be considered.

Media requests

It was confirmed that all media requests are now passed to Catherine Lange (Communications Officer).

Membership Renewals / Terminations

During the past year there have been two refusals for membership, due to illegal rallies being held in lockdown. There has also been termination of one membership due to the discovery of illegal finds.

Letter of complaint to the BBC

A letter of complaint had been sent from the NCMD to the BBC regarding an episode of Crimewatch during which an archaeologist had repeatedly described nighthawkers as illegal

detectorists. There had been a delay in the response from the BBC, but the response made it clear that they did not agree with the view of the NCMD.

Freedom of Information request

The NCMD had filed a Freedom of Information request regarding the £50k funding of the AoD/IoD. The information received was not acceptable and therefore a second request was submitted. Eventually the NCMD received a limited amount of information in response to the request.

5 NCMD ADMIN / MEMBERSHIP / FINANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS

Finance update

Siobhan Liehne gave a brief update. There was little to report as it was not yet year end.

NCMD is still pursuing tenders for an investigative audit of the NCMD financial accounts.

Membership Update

John Rigby gave a brief update. Memberships are going well. There are currently 3531 individual NCMD members. Renewals through clubs are slower than normal. As clubs are unable to meet due to restrictions, some clubs are recommending their members join as individual members for now. It was agreed that hopefully clubs would survive and that club memberships would pick up once clubs could meet again. Some clubs had already decided to provide free membership for next year.

Membership Correspondence

John Rigby confirmed that he receives occasional notes from members thanking the NCMD for all they do. Siobhan had also received two anonymous donations in the past year. The donations had been included in the Profit and loss report.

6 NCMD COMMUNICATIONS

SARA (Sports and Recreation Alliance)

Brian Pollard had recently asked Catherine Lange to take a lead on SARA issues due to his recent ill health. Brian confirmed that he still receives all emails from SARA. Catherine will deal with the correspondence from SARA and refer to Brian as and when necessary.

Catherine gave a summary on other SARA related issues including the 'Agriculture Act 2020' NCMD are seeking an update on this and it was agreed it would be good to be invited to regular meetings.

Videos.

The five NCMD videos have now been released. To date the videos have had over 6k views equal to over 637 hours of viewing. The YouTube account has over 200 subscribers.

Facebook

The group page has had achieved an audience reach of 29.2k people in the last 28 days with over 11k post engagements. The group is followed by over 8k people and is liked by over 5.7k.

Articles and features in the last 6 months

Press

Guardian article on illegal detecting

Country file article on the fight against heritage crime.

Radio

Talk Radio (Jan 21) on the popularity of the hobby.

BBC Radio 4 (Feb 21) on the Treasure Act report and detecting as a hobby.

Other activity

Leaflet on responsible detecting

For members and people new to the hobby. Distribution through Digging Deep, retailers, regions, and events. This is the final part of the 5 Video budget. Now completed ready to print.

Membership card automation

Design mirrors the website. Target roll out late April.

Stakeholder management

Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)

Member research used to try and improve access to PAS and the process for recording general finds and Treasure. Progress is slow so far, but we are having more regular meetings and relationships are improving.

Portable Antiquities Advisory Group (PAAG)

The Communications officer and General Secretary now represent the NCMD on this group. We are playing a more proactive role in the group and will be looking to give the hobby a bigger voice in the way PAS is changing.

National Farmers Union (NFU)

We are now affiliate members and a meeting is planned to discuss how we can work together on green waste and the Treasure Act review.

Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)

We have had numerous video meetings on covid restrictions, the Treasure Act review, etc. The DCMS have sought our input to the review and welcomed our offer to be a way to get a wider input from the hobby. We have had formal presentations on the review plan, been interviewed by the external consultants as they develop new definitions of 'treasure', and officers will be involved in the round table discussions this summer. Hobby input to the review will be very much a joint activity with DCMS.

The Sports and Recreation Alliance (SARA)

Brian Pollard and Catherine Lange represent the NCMD with SARA. They have helped us to lobby the DCMS on getting covid restrictions changed in February. They helped us by using their multiple contacts in other parts of the DCMS.

They are now keeping a watching brief for us on the Agri Agreements. We know there is more to do on building advocates in the House of Commons and the House of Lords to be our voice in tabling amendments and speaking on our behalf on any bills. SARA are happy to help us do that.

Plans for 2021/22

Website rebuild.

The current NCMD website site is old, using older software. Technically we urgently need a postcode checker to significantly reduce the problems with managing membership applications, which we cannot do with this system. Lots of advice is missing, for example there is no info on the Treasure Act. We need a beginner's section, more on legally detecting (you cannot detect on common land, beaches and where to get info, etc.) and a 'members' area' which only members can access. Competitive tenders will be used to choose an agency prior to approval of the Executive Committee.

Videos

We may need to change the existing Treasure Act one. Ones on other key topics, in a completely different style, may also be considered.

Press

We need to consider commissioning freelance journalists to write article for the press (Principally broadsheets to influence MPs and other key targets) to promote positive aspects of our hobby. This will be part of a strategic PR campaign and may not look like they come from the NCMD. The aim is primarily to influence Westminster decision makers and to sway popular opinion of our hobby ahead the Treasure Act Review.

7 NCMD DIGGING DEEP

There had only been one publication of Digging Deep in December 2020, which had been well received.

Delegates were asked their views on whether there should be a Summer and Christmas edition of Digging Deep.

This was discussed in detail. Some of the discussions included:

Siobhan Lihne proposed the idea of a single-issue handbook or factsheet containing information such as regional contacts, executive reports, club details and FLO details. This was discussed and it was agreed that it was a good idea that should be looked at in further detail. John Rigby reminded delegates that the NCMD had been considering a handbook as a tribute to Trevor Austin for the past few years, but this had not yet happened. The original plan was for Searcher magazine to produce the handbook for free by selling advertising space within the publication. It was considered whether Treasure Hunting would help in a similar way. It was agreed it would be a large task to find all the relevant articles written by Trevor. John Rigby was sure he had access to numerous old newsletters written by the late Bob Baldock of the Midlands region. The potential of using the £15k donation to produce the handbook was discussed.

Catherine Lange confirmed that NCMD were considering the content of leaflets to be issued alongside the YouTube videos. Catherine was waiting for the design proposals for the leaflets. The topics would include Code of Conduct, Recording and the Metal Detecting laws in England and Scotland.

It was proposed that a Digging Deep be published in June, but it was agreed that more help was required in preparing Digging Deep and perhaps a sub-committee should be formed to

focus on this. It was also agreed that the timings of future Digging Deep newsletters needed to be considered so that the newsletters would coincide with the Treasure Act review.

It was agreed that the Facebook page and other social media needed to be kept up to date.

John Rigby confirmed that the NCMD has a Mailchimp account, which they have used to send out emails in the past. John is still awaiting membership details from some members to enable him to update the membership database. It was suggested that once the database was up to date, most issues of Digging Deep could be sent by email and sent by post only to those who specifically request a hard copy or do not have an email address.

Brian Pollard highlighted one main problem being keeping the content up to date and fresh to maintain the interest of members. It was agreed that it was crucial to get the message to members and encouraging them to read Digging Deep.

Links to a swap shop or sales page was discussed.

Delegates were asked their opinion on the number of issues of Digging Deep that should be produced each year. If NCMD membership continues to grow at the same rate as in 2020, the cost of producing and posting Digging Deep could be approximately £20k per issue.

Vote

A vote was taken on the number of issues per year. Despite the potential costs, the general agreement and majority vote was in favour of two issues to be produced each year, depending on whether there is sufficient content.

Kevin Gorman confirmed that dates will be put in place for submitting content and every region will be notified of the deadline date to enable members to prepare items or articles.

8 EMERGENCY EXCAVATIONS / FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

In February 2019, the NCMD agreed to provide an emergency excavation fund. This would be money set aside to fund an accredited archaeologist to excavate the finds in the event of an NCMD member finding a hoard.

The draft of the conditions document had been circulated for comments. Once it has been finalised and a decision has been made as to what action to take on this, guidance will be circulated to let members know what is available to them and in what situation they will be able to apply for access to some of the emergency fund.

ACTION: All officers to respond to the General Secretary with comments/suggestions on the draft document. The draft needs to be finalised by week ending 7th March 2021 in preparation for the PAAG meeting.

9 PAS RELATED UPDATES

Treasure Act Review

Catherine Lange has been in regular contact with Dr Rosie Weetch, who is the Head of the Heritage Unit at DCMS, regarding Covid and what is happening with the Treasure Act

Review. They had discussed NCMD contributing to the review and the suggestion that Rosie should speak directly to NCMD members. Rosie had given a presentation to the NCMD committee in January 2021. When asked if commercial rallies would be included in the current review, Rosie confirmed that it was not currently included but would be looked at in 2022. Catherine is awaiting confirmation from Rosie when she will be speaking to members.

The next stage of the process is for a 3-month review to take place, led by Mike Heyworth and two others – Dr Jill Chitty and Dr Adam Daubney. Mike Heyworth will report back his findings to the DCMS and then in the late Autumn the proposals should be put before Parliament. NCMD have been invited to be a part of the 3-month review and Kevin Gorman and Catherine Lange are going to talk to them about this soon. Catherine will share the date and time of this meeting once it is confirmed, so that comments can be sent to her in advance of the meeting.

Catherine gave some more detail on the review and this was discussed in detail. The review would be looking at reporting of finds, export licensees, responsible metal detecting code, speeding up of the handling process and timescales. It was agreed that NCMD needs to push on the speeding up of the handling process. This has been an ongoing issue which was due to be resolved by the appointment of a dedicated coroner for treasure, but this has never been put in place.

Catherine has proposed that a PR campaign needs to be sorted soon and she has suggested that the NCMD pay for PR expertise.

PAAG

Catherine Lange gave a brief update on PAAG. NCMD had written to Michael Lewis expressing concern that Mike Heyworth was still chair of PAAG, in addition to leading the Treasure review and he is also chair of various other groups and committees. The PAS Strategic Plan has been renamed. PAS funding and funding cuts were discussed.

Prior to the PAAG meeting Catherine had been looking for suggestions on new ways of recording etc. FLOs had been involved and had come up with good ideas. Some of these ideas had been presented to Michael Lewis but he had dismissed them without further discussion.

PAS Annual Report 2019

The PAS Annual Report 2019 was published in December 2019. A virtual reception had been held for the launch of the report, but Catherine had not attended. Catherine gave brief details regarding this.

Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS)

There was nothing further to report on this, but William Hargreaves will let everyone know if there are any further updates from the bulletin.

Agriculture Act 2020

William Hargreaves had nothing further to report regarding the Agriculture Act 2020.

10 CONTAMINATED GREEN WASTE

William Hargreaves gave an update on the issue of contaminated green waste. A few things have developed since the last meeting.

William had been working on a map showing locations of reported contaminated green waste, but he would like to produce a map with even more detail that will be useful in the future for rallies and detecting sites. William uses the What3words app and wants to encourage members to use it. It is a free app which allows you to give a 3m x 3m exact location. It can be used in an emergency so that people can be located, but it also allows users to send location details, which would be useful for William in highlighting contaminated land.

The Women's Institute (WI) had previously taken the issue of contaminated green waste on board as they are passionate about what is happening in the fields and countryside. It was agreed that the WI are a powerful force and are useful to keep on side. Involving other groups was discussed including the Vegan Society and other similar groups. William confirmed that McCain's refuse to take potatoes or other produce from contaminated sites. It was agreed it was important to focus on the food side rather than the hobby side of the issue as so many people are affected in this way.

The NFU had produced a paper on Land spreading which had been updated in October 2020. William read out extracts from this paper and this was discussed. William has a list of companies with waste licenses valid until 2022. There is evidence of several companies who have been fined for spreading contaminated waste still operating with their waste license, which is one of the reasons why this is such a growing issue. There have also been some incidents of contaminated waste being spread on Heritage sites. Mark Harrison has been made aware of this.

Catherine Lange has associate membership of the NFU and she suggested working with the NFU as they are large and influential. It was agreed the NCMD could offer their services to the NFU. Catherine also has contacts at AHDB Potatoes (formerly the British Potato Council).

Brian Pollard had previously looked at the human / animal side of the issue of contaminated waste in addition to the farming and hobby perspective in 2009 when the issue had first come to light. Brian had come up with a list of potential groups/organisations that would have an interest in the issue including Ramblers and Anglers.

William had visited farms where livestock were regularly consuming metals from contaminated waste.

Catherine suggested NCMD should try to get a meeting with the NFU and various other parties at the same time.

There were further discussions on this issue and the possibility of working in conjunction with the NFU etc. Recent research carried out with members had revealed that approximately 45% of members had come across contaminated green waste and it was agreed it was important to use these statistics.

11 REGIONAL REPORTS

North West Region

Kevin Gorman gave an update. Like most regions, the North West has not been able to hold actual meetings, but they began Zoom meetings in the Summer. The last Zoom meeting was attended by 8 clubs and they are expecting more at their March meeting. Minutes of the meetings are circulated to all 15 clubs in the region. The North West exhibition held at Chester Town Hall looks likely to be cancelled for a second year due to the Covid situation. The current plan is for the exhibition and the North West free membership rally to be arranged for 2021. Both events are dependent on restrictions being lifted. There was nothing further to report from the North West region.

Midlands Region

Brian Pollard confirmed there was no update from the Midlands region.

On a personal note, Brian confirmed that he would be acting as a City Host for the Coventry City of Culture events in 2021. He expected there to be some events which could involve the hobby. These may be similar to the Heritage Weekend exhibitions held in previous years.

Scottish Region

Alastair Hacket reported that although it had been a quiet year for the Scottish region, there had been record membership numbers, which were still increasing. They were unable to hold their AGM so officers in the Scottish region had remained in post. The next AGM is due to take place in early April. Metal detecting had been able to continue in Scotland whilst England had been in lockdown with no such activities taking place. There was nothing further to report from the Scottish region.

Anglian Region

Wendy Howard confirmed that there was nothing to report from the Anglian Region.

12 MEMBERSHIP FEES / REGIONAL SUBSIDIES / RELATED MATTERS

This item was included on the agenda following a proposal by John and Laura Wells (Midlands Region) at the February 2020 OGM, that the regions be allowed to keep an extra £1 per member from the NCMD membership fee - this to be added to the £2 per member subsidy already paid by the NCMD to the regions.

The extract from the February 2020 OGM minutes was as follows:

- *John and Laura Wells put forward a proposal that less money should be given to the NCMD from the membership fee charged by the regions. For example, the Midlands region charge £8 membership and £6 goes to the NCMD. John and Laura suggested that only £5 is given to the NCMD for the membership cards and £1 is retained by the regions.*

The cost of insurance per head was discussed. There were discussions on how the different regions spend their money and how the regions charge different amounts for their memberships.

It was proposed that in principle the cost of membership cards should be reduced from £6 to £5.

*Proposed by Laura Wells – Midlands Region
Seconded by Brian Pollard – Midlands Region
Vote: Majority in favour with 1 abstention.*

It was agreed that the cost of membership and amount charged for membership cards should be added to the agenda for the AGM in June. It was asked that delegates discuss with their members in the regions and come prepared with figures and proposals for discussion at the AGM.

The regions who had put forward and agreed the above proposal did not have any representatives at the meeting, so therefore the £1 extra per member subsidy could not be discussed in detail.

Brief discussions led to an agreement that an alternative could be if a region finds itself short of funds to adequately administer their regional duties or hold regional events, they may be able to apply to the NCMD for extra funds. The region would need to provide the reasons for the shortfall and give details of any intended purchases. It was agreed that there are numerous ways that additional funds can be applied for to be used in the regions and not just by increasing fees.

It was agreed that this subject would require further discussion with all relevant parties present before any final decisions could be made.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Regions

It was confirmed that the following regions have stated that they will not attend any AGM, OGM or EGM until face-to-face meetings can take place:

Midlands, Yorkshire, Southern and Western Regions

Kevin Gorman confirmed that the NCMD Officers supported by the remaining regions would continue to administer the day-to-day business of the National Council.

June 2020 EGM

There was nothing further that anyone wanted to raise or discuss from the minutes of the June 2020 EGM.

Covid 19 Update

Catherine confirmed that statements had been released regarding Covid 19 and how the hobby was being affected. There had been a statement from SARA last week on how Covid 19 was affecting sports and leisure.

It was agreed that a statement would be required shortly based on the dates proposed in the easing of the national lockdown in England.

It was agreed it was important that the NCMD did not encourage large digs or rallies for the foreseeable future.

IoD / AoD

Wendy Howard raised the issue that some members think that the NCMD is sitting back and doing nothing about the IoD / AoD issue. Other delegates confirmed they had received similar comments.

Alastair confirmed that the 2-page letter sent to members made the NCMD's position clear. There had also been recent statements on the NCMD Facebook page. The current situation was discussed in detail.

It was suggested that NCMD do not attend any further rallies in the future. John Rigby suggested that this applied to all commercial rallies but the NCMD should continue to support charity rallies including the Rodney Cook Memorial Dig which raises money for cancer charities. John raised concerns that certain charitable rallies organised by individual members also need to be supported by the NCMD. Others agreed with this.

This was discussed in detail.

A vote was taken on the following proposal:

It should become standard policy that the NCMD attend no events unless arranged by clubs or regions, except in exceptional circumstances that are voted upon. Evidence would need to be provided that the event is purely to raise money for charity. A vote would need to take place to ensure NCMD are attending for the right reasons.

Proposed by Catherine Lange - Communications Officer

Seconded by William Hargreaves - North West Region

Vote: Unanimous

It was confirmed by Catherine that although there will be pressure on the NCMD to say more about the IoD/AoD, they were remaining quiet about the issue for now. The letter to members set out clearly the views of the NCMD.

Audit

The NCMD is still pursuing tenders for an investigative audit of the NCMD financial accounts. There had been some problems finding the right company to do the external audit. There have been discussions with one company with two further potential companies to be contacted. The NCMD require a minimum of two quotes before seeking the agreement of the full Executive Committee to proceed.

GDPR - Data protection

It was highlighted that the GDPR references on the NCMD website are out of date as they date from 1998. Catherine Lange confirmed that she would arrange an update to the details on the website.

John Rigby confirmed that new members joining through clubs are asked to tick a box on the membership form agreeing to the NCMD accessing their details and sending them emails. It was agreed that advice should be given to clubs and regions regarding the information that members should agree to sharing with the NCMD. John Rigby confirmed that new members could not complete their membership without agreeing that the NCMD could hold their data for insurance purposes. It was also agreed the Privacy statement should be updated. This was all discussed in detail.

It was agreed that Catherine Lange, Kevin Gorman, and John Rigby would come up with a plan to take this forward to ensure clubs and regions are compliant. Although the Constitution cannot be amended without an AGM, it was agreed that updates could be made.

Junior Finds Competition

Hilary Fagen gave details of the Junior Finds Competition that she had been running. The competition had been open to junior members aged 4 to 11 years old. The pictures of the entries had been voted on and cups and prizes will be sent out to the winning entries for coin, artefact, and hoard categories. All children who entered would also receive a goody bag. Hilary will prepare a report with all the details. She has thoroughly enjoyed running the competition and hopes to run it again next year. It was agreed that it was important to get junior members involved.

Wendy Howard thanked Hilary for her hard work in running the competition and she also thanked Kevin for coming up with the idea.

The HATT competition was briefly discussed.

NCMD Insurance

John Rigby confirmed that he had only received one quote so far, which he had circulated to the officers for their comments. Sports Insure are the current insurers but John has not been able to get new quotes from them as the two people he usually deals with have left the company. There is only four weeks remaining on the current insurance policy.

The insurance was discussed.

Alastair Hacket recommended going with the new quote as it has been checked like for like and is lower than the amount paid for last year. It was agreed that John should ensure the insurance includes an additional policy for cyber-attacks.

It was confirmed the insurance covers approximately 25,000 members.

A vote was taken on the proposal to accept the new quotes as given in the quotation including the additional cyber insurance.

Vote:

Proposed by Siobhan Liehne – Scottish Region

Seconded by Catherine Lange – Communications Officer

Vote: Unanimous – all in favour

Keith Westcott

Catherine had seen on Facebook that Keith Westcott had been receiving death threats. It was proposed and agreed that Catherine should write something today and publish it to the NCMD Facebook page. It was agreed she should emphasise that regardless of views the NCMD do not condone the use of death threats as it not acceptable in any situation. It was also agreed that any members found to be sending such threats would be permanently removed from the NCMD membership.