



The Royal Engineers Association Radio Branch

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TG Milne, President
REA Radio Branch
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Tel: 01428 606298
Email: re379@btinternet.com

16th September 2017

Commanding Officer
3 Training Regiment
Gibraltar Barracks
Camberley
Surrey

Group Director South East District REA
CO 1 RSME Regiment
Brompton Barracks
Chatham
Kent

Copy to:
OC Command Support Branch
Controller REA

Sir,

References:

- A. REA Radio Branch Report to REA SE District Director dated 16th July 2017
- B. REA Radio Branch Development Meetings dated 1st August and 4th September 2017
- C. REA Radio Branch Development Plan Version 1.0 attached.

Royal Engineers Association Radio Branch

In accordance with Reference A, REA Radio branch has long been thought unsustainable, out of place and mired by obsolete process. The current branch secretary, Mr Dixon has therefore taken time to analyse the gaps between the current situation and the corps requirement; to provide a lifelong experience for soldiers in the command support trades, and develop esprit de corps.

Branch Development

Senior serving and command support veterans have now examined practical measures from a joint perspective. This engagement concludes that the corps requirements need to be developed through a transitional programme - refocusing the REA branch on its natural home at Minley with RE Command Support Branch (CSB). There is then the opportunity for the

CSB to become the first unit or department to be directly involved with its veteran's affairs, (with the benefit of a collective mindset and assets.)

Esprit de Corps

Traditionally CSB has met the needs of its personnel using welfare (and training) funding for hobbies and projects. Today any assets that facilitate this have been largely disposed of and/or are no longer relevant or available in a modern context. A business case therefore exists to modernise and acquire new equipment. This will comprise a base station and a mobile radio station from which to showcase the need for hobbies, practiced while serving or after service and provide for adventurous pursuits. The whole object being to keep branch members mentally active, challenged and highly visible, while following a more attractive annual programme of events – together.

Request for Funding from REA Welfare Funds

Before it can proceed however, the plan needs commanding officer approval and the bid for funds endorsed. Could you please therefore consider the proposal and return a copy of the request for REA Welfare funding (at page 5 of appendix 2 to reference C), to the branch with your endorsement? (Alternatively, if you need further explanation we would be happy to present if you provide a date and venue).

Such transition can only come at a cost and require a range of skills to manage it, therefore your further support is requested. Could you please give consideration for the emerging projects status within the corps? We are sure it equally applies elsewhere in the corps family. To enable it, we think a project or programme manager needs to be appointed and he or she should report to a board with enough senior input and access to funding to achieve the desired effect.

Would you also please note our gratitude to Captain John Woolley RE who has hosted the branch this year and taken a keen interest in our affairs.

Yours Aye,

TG Milne

TG Milne
President, REA Radio Branch



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22nd July 2017

REA Radio Branch - Branch Development Plan re-issued 4th September 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. REA Radio Branch

1.1. In accordance with its 2016/17 objectives, on paper the REA Radio Branch has a baseline of eighty six people, mainly veterans on its books. Several serving members have now joined the branch. Compared to the numbers of people in the trade, active or not, this is miniscule.

As it is, the branch is thought to be unsustainable. Consequently activities are sparse, and its presence is low. Neither serving soldiers or veterans have any great awareness of each other. It stands to reason several thousand people qualify as members. This situation is therefore changeable.

1.2. During 2015/16, to increase its sustainability, the branch has adopted the corps commanders aims for the association which are; to develop the REA into an organisation that includes all sapper interests, in a whole life approach, and to develop and foster esprit de corps. The branch has therefore taken time to reconnoitre how it can change to reflect this.

1.3. It found that the approach requires a different business model to the current one, and this must be supported from the centre.

2. Mission and Purpose

2.1. According to SSAFA and the NHS, the link between poor health and negative lifestyles is clear. The purpose of the Radio branch is the promotion of positive mental and physical health through both association with comrades, and the promotion of radio and electronic hobbies, a special interest that is part of the branch heritage.

It stands to reason that as a benefit of encouraging this branch to develop, less of the sappers it touches will suffer early demise through poor health, loneliness and boredom.

Phase 1 of this development plan shows growth can be achieved through reaching out – see appendix 1.

3. Aim

3.1. The aim of this plan is therefore to initiate planned change, and enable growth, taking into account the aims of British society for the welfare of its soldiers and veterans.



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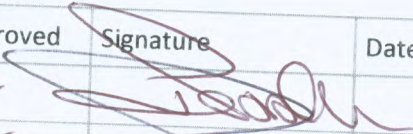

REA Radio Branch - Draft Branch Development Plan Version 1.0 dated 22nd July 2017

APPROVAL

REA Radio Branch

	Name	Approved	Signature	Date
Chairman	R MacDonald			
President	TG Milne			

Command Support Branch

	Rank	Name	Approved	Signature	Date
OC	Maj	Gurung	✓		
AI	Capt	J Woolley RE	✓		



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REA Radio Branch - Branch Development Plan Version 1.0 dated 22nd July 2017

APPROVAL

REA Radio Branch

APPROVAL

REA Radio Branch

R Macdonald
R MACDONALD
CHAIR RADIO BRANCH.

	Name	Approved	Signature	Date
Chairman	R MacDonald		<i>R MacDonald</i>	020817
President	TG Milne		<i>TG Milne</i>	1 Aug 17

Command Support Branch

Command Support Branch

	Rank	Name	Approved	Signature	Date
OC	Maj	DK Gurung MVO QGE			
AI	Capt	J Woolley RE			

PLAN

4. Phase 1 - Reconnaissance (Complete 2016/17).

4.1. To achieve phase 1, Courtesy of SDPlus Ltd, time and effort was volunteered to consolidate the branch membership and scope further development as follows:

Working with a notional business model, stakeholders were identified and the positions of the majority stakeholders were aligned by re-forging some links. New members were added to the baseline, inactive members were archived. Member and REA data requirements were reviewed. To test the hypothesis, that growth would follow such change, a prototype website and database was constructed and operated. This included prototype processes and limited marketing and outreach exercises.

4.2. Lessons Learnt. Test results at appendix 1 show the impact of the approach and how this can be used, setting the scene for a full transformation. Broadly, a dozen new veteran applicants and a growth of approx 125% in interest was achieved during this phase. In the same period only one new member was recruited using the old process. The outcome confirms demand, and that activities and marketing are the key to growth. Phase one is now concluded but remains as a parallel running prototype for further development. The latest joiner, an ex-Corporal, approached the branch through its website this week.

4.3. The structure of the branch includes special interests and approx. fifty percent of members share an interest in radio and electronics. While this is highly significant to the mission, the aim will be to encourage all sappers to take an interest via a balanced program of events.

5. Phase 2 - Esprit de Corps 2017/18

5.1. If it is allowed to proceed, this phase is to develop the branch assets and resources. It includes: establishing a routine program of combined events centred on the RSME and the branch's home - the Command Support Branch, Communications Training Wing. To further develop esprit de corps the SIG will focus on soldiers and veterans welfare, specifically the promotion of positive lifestyles in barracks or the community. To facilitate this it has chosen to re-establish radio and electronics as its special interest and as a club, to encourage self-training, related projects and adventurous pursuits.

This is to be achieved by making a modern static amateur radio station available at the school and a separate mobile station to be operated and demonstrated from remote locations and during corps events. It will also remain focussed on improving the corps presence on the international shortwave bands, and integrating veterans into training exercises. (and demonstrating this facet of amateur radio to trainees). These events will then be exploited in the branch publication, On Net, and Via Sapper Magazine etc.

5.2. Consistency across the whole lives of sappers will be achieved by making the same facilities available across the generations, soldiers and veterans alike. Our welfare grant request at appendix 2 details the list of new physical assets to be used to build the RE Radio and Electronics club. Our programme of events in 2018 will be designed to include raising the branch profile and displaying our assets to leave people we reach out to, demonstrate or educate, with no doubt they should become *active* members of the REA and get a hobby.

6. Phase 3 - Outreach 2017/18

This phase is to run concurrently with phase 2, phase 3 is to consolidate data about members in a single shared management database and reach out to them in a planned marketing approach, while focussing on managing the growth.

7. Conclusions

7.1. In its current form the radio branch of the REA has few assets or activities that would attract and hold the attention of subscribers. It has proven it can reach out to people but it lacks the business intelligence to go further. It now wishes to consolidate itself by:

- 7.1.1. Acquiring the assets that will make it attractive to various generations
- 7.1.2. Marketing itself with its entire customer base and others
- 7.1.3. Working together on an imaginative, relevant and inclusive programme of events aimed to draw in and retain its members.

7.2. When it has the human resources and funds to implement such a programme it can move into a position where it can fund itself and meet the corps aspirations. It assumes there is no other option.

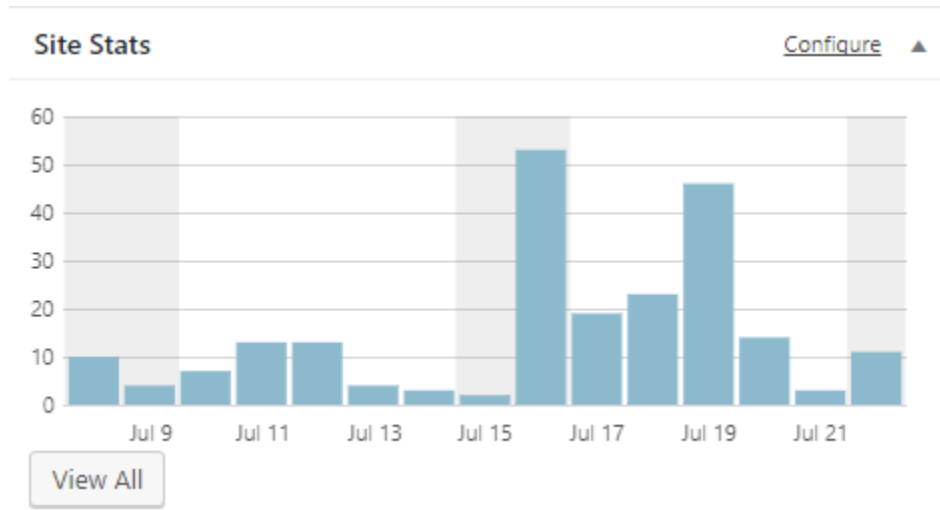
8. Recommendations

A volunteer development team should be recruited that can complete the transition while it seeks or raises funding.

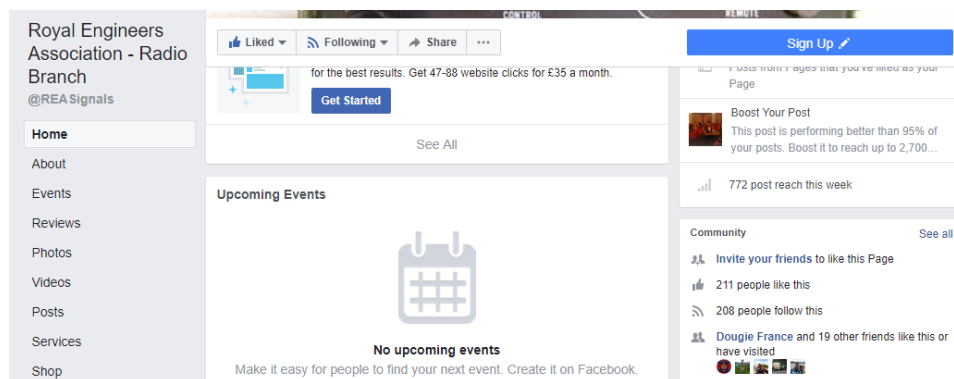
Stuart Dixon MBCS, MInstLM
Branch Secretary
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33 Medhurst Crescent
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07703026329

Appendix 1 to Development Plan Test Results Social Media and Marketing

1. Website Hits www.reasignals.net



2. Social Media Presence



3. Results

3.1. The website has facilities to reach out to registered members when new content appears. The website statistics above show the number of visitors from members who read bulletins and articles posted there. These can also be read on Facebook, where 208 people currently follow us. Without publicising it, several new members have joined via our website which uses an e-form to sign people up.

Conclusion

3.2. Social media has exposed the branch to a wider audience than its current membership of 86 registered members. When there is content, it is being read and responded to by active members, inactive members and non-members alike. If it takes additional steps such as advertising when it has

good quality content, there is potential for several thousand people with registered interests in the corps and signalling to see our posts and have the opportunity to respond. This now needs management to turn hits on the website into joiners and active members. If we advertise we can reach thousands according to their preferences like "Royal Engineers" and "Radio" but this takes money. We have not yet advertised the join button.

4. Recommendations

4.1 The creation of media content to support growth is a high priority. The proposal is for CSB to adopt a policy of publishing stories from its courses including profiling top students and course photographs. The REA branch has trophies that could be used to incentivise creative writing. Once the development plan is approved it will have assets which it can further exploit.

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Appendix 2 - Business Case and Grant Application

Annex A to
REA Unit & Branch Welfare Fund

APPLICATION FOR A GRANT FROM THE REA WELFARE FUND

DETAILS OF UNIT/BRANCH

Title. Radio Branch, REA

c/o 33 Medhurst Crescent

Gravesend DA12 4HJ

REA Group HQ Unit: HQ SE Group c/o CO, 1 RSME Regt, Brompton Barracks, Chatham, ME4 4UG

RE Warfare Wing, c/o CO 3 RSME Regt, Gibraltar Barracks, Camberley, Surrey GU17 9LP

OC Command Support Branch, REWW.

Capt J Woolley RE, AI Command Support Branch, REWW

DETAILS OF PROJECT

Requirements Specification.

To:

Create a Radio and Electronics club within the corps, to foster self-training in radio and electronics.

- The club must be, equipped for mobile and static radio operating.

Static. Establish a static digital remote controlled amateur radio station with enough power to establish a strong presence on the International Amateur Radio Bands using a distinctive callsign such as G3RE to be based at Command Support Branch, REWW, Gibraltar Barracks.

- Remote operation is to be via the internet.
- When the station is open its log is to be completed by the operator and displayed on the internet.

Mobile. Establish a mobile radio station. This is to be operated by qualified crew:

- At a number of venues in the corps calendar, providing a highly visible presence for special events.
- It should also be available for use by any licensed amateur in the corps family for trips of up to two weeks within UK.
- Its location is to be tracked by GPS and the data from the log is to be displayed on the internet.

- The mobile station should be appropriately decorated with the various logo's of the sponsors and its purpose and where it belongs should be in no doubt by its color scheme and design.

FINANCE

Total cost of project:

£73000 + 10% contingency.

Unit contribution:

Currently there are no significant branch funds, however on approval subscriptions will be raised to pay ongoing costs.

Other contributions:

Currently n/a

Grant requested:

£80000 Including VAT

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Project Costs:

Ser	Item	Notes	Approx Cost
1	Remotely Operated Base Station\1Kw Linear\AutoTuner	IC 7160 (3600) + ICOM Linear\Autotuner (5000) IC7100 VHF Digital D-Star (1000)	10000
2	Mobile Unit based on a Camper Van with Awning (to accommodate 4 People camping) complete with:		35000
a.	Trailer mounted Pneumatic mast.		10000
b.	Mobile Transceiver and optional digital hotspot	IC7100	1000
c.	Mobile HF Set	IC7300	3000
d.	4G SmartPhone\SatNav (for mobile internet connectivity). WIFI Hotspot	BT Contract	600
e.	Mobile Artwork		1000
f.	Mobile Conversion and Fitting		1000
g.	Multi Screen Laptop Computers x 2. Station Operating Consoles (Display Maps, Operating Screen and Log) c\w software. Remote Software, Printers		2500
h.	Mobile antenna various		800
i.	Mains Generator\Lighting		2000
3	• Digital Rotator x 2		1800
4	Secure Storage and Garage	RSME	
5	Secure room or cabinet for HF Base Station with Internet Connection	RSME	2000
6	Static Antenna Various Upgrades		2000
	Approx Grand Total		73000

Justification

1. For a number of years amateur radio has been used by the armed forces to train radio operators. The RSME is no exception to this, its signalling syllabus and the City and Guilds radio amateurs examination have much in common. Ham radio is a hobby which encourages self-training in radio operating and electronics with many facets, for example today adventurous pursuits involving remote radio operation are popular. According to OFCOM the UK Radio Agency it continues to be used by radio professions to develop new methods. This has strong links with the corps heritage going back over three centuries. In WW1 for example the Fullerphone - a type of field telephone was invented by a sapper officer. Many radio hams were enlisted into HM Forces as radio operators during WW2. After the war, when a ban on operating was lifted, enough "ham" radio operators were present to give rise to an army amateur radio club with over six hundred members today, who's members peaked at over a thousand. The RE has its own story in pioneering military communications and its requirement for signalers to support its command and control has motivated and educated a number of soldiers to self-train in order to improve their communicating skills. During the cold war sappers, operated amateur radio from their barracks and married quarters, often forming radio, electronics and later, computing clubs in barracks to counter loneliness and develop skills. For more information the REA has a website at www.reasignals.net. Out in the community, ham radio is used by 85,000 people to self-train and develop communications between communities. Many radio clubs exist. The current focus in the community is on health and well-being and it is a fact that hobbies, particularly like this one help to prevent poor physical and mental health, loneliness and dementia - all of which impact on veterans and service men and women alike.
2. Currently the corps presence on the international airwaves is limited - provided by the remnants of the post war veterans who took the opportunity to become licensed. 86 RE veterans are members of the radio branch of the REA. 32 of these are licensed amateurs. Many more of those trained at RSME remain inactive but are entitled to branch membership. The command support branch has dispensed with parts of the syllabus for a time but more recently, is finding it requires to reinstate it, to cover deficiencies in its long range communication skills.
3. Activity in the REA Radio Branch has dwindled. It has all but ceased to take part in sapper events - affecting its ability to engage with the corps and the community. The branch wishes to attract more active members and re-engage with the corps. It is ready to implement a strategy that will guarantee an upsurge. Together REA Radio Branch and the Command Support Branch are proposing to join forces and use its combined assets to implement the "whole life concept" which the corps requires. As it does, it anticipates membership numbers to increase. On its own it does not have sufficient funds to achieve this, nor enough active members to come forward and assist in the process of re-energising and running itself.
4. The primary aim of this project is to develop esprit de corps. It will develop this by initiating relevant joint projects. Two projects are planned to take advantage of REA welfare funding. One is to build a modern, remote radio station with a powerful signal at RSME and to activate Golf Three Royal Engineers (G3RE) from its home, there. This will create presence, visibility and enable club activities that promote the REA and focus on welfare, training and education. As it runs its weekly radio nets, these are currently recorded and put online. As it makes contacts these will be put online. A second project is to provide an adventurous element, to activate a mobile radio station from anywhere in the country using modern digital communications. This will follow the corps calendar and be used at events to highlight the benefits of hobbies for veterans and servicemen. These two projects will enable a third project which is a club focusing on training and education and radio, electronics and computing projects. In this project, the aims of the corps are aligned with those of the mental health charity, Mind - especially their project "Men in Sheds".
5. One of the advantages of this approach is that there is enough challenging content to exercise a whole range of skills at various levels and have fun and make friends across the two organisations. Everyone involved will experience a benefit to their physical and mental health by engaging in challenging projects and team working - developing skills for life which they can enjoy in barracks, married quarters and the community in later life.

Support from the Subject Matter Expert (SME).

6. REARB will provide support throughout. This project has access to consultancy from an ex RE project manager with MOD and police experience delivering radio and IT projects.

7. To meet the requirement and engage senior personnel, there are more than one work stream and all will require staffing from volunteers. A team of volunteers with commitment, comprising the following skill set will be required:

- HR or man management, Communications and Marketing, Membership, Data Management and Cyber Skills, technical and project management, finance etc.
- Education and Training
- Technical Design and Management - Automotive and Electronic, engineering, e-Networking

Support from the Chain of Command

a. Commanding Officer's Comments.

DETAILS OF PROJECT OFFICERS

Project Officers

Stuart Dixon, Radio Branch REA Secretary, address as above. Tel: 07703026329 email: stuart.dixon@sdplus.co.uk

Capt J Woolley RE, REWW - Address as above, john.wooley616@mod.uk