

Dear friends,

Following the General Meeting on the 21st at the National Memorial Arboretum (see below) I thought I'd drop all Welsh Sections a line - or two - with my impressions and some updating information - and also to ask some questions. (Apologies for the length!)

**1. The GM:** It was rather an uninformative meeting in the very modern surroundings of the NMA. About 60 attended, so it was just about quorate but not the normal size meeting that would have allowed for extended discussion. There was no card check. The Board won on all votes. (The figures will appear in the Journal in due course.) Mario Costa-Sa was running the counting. (I had told him beforehand that this was highly irregular given that he had campaigned for a particular outcome - but he said no one else was available and that the tellers would 'see all'.) Curiously, only 11 of my notified proxies were handed to me along with 20 others I had not heard from and whose full names I could not read anyway because of the way the spread sheet had been printed off. I was told to raise the matter at the end if the voting was close.

Alan Cathcart gave a long, interesting - but not very inspiring - talk about testing racing machines. It soaked up time in my view which could have been used for discussion.

At the end, with my Regulatory Advisory Group hat on, I raised the FBHVC/MAG issue. (You will recall the Board have decided not to renew affiliation to the Federation.) It was proposed that there should be a vote in the room. (Mario tried to divert the discussion, saying there should be a lower affiliation fee for motorcycle clubs - but had to concede to putting the wider issue to the meeting.) There was a more or less unanimous vote that we should re-affiliate. He insisted he had not seen the new offer I had obtained from FBHVC (not so!) - so I have sent it to him again (cc Mike Wills) plus a copy of Jacqueline Bickerstaff's paper on what the Federation has done over the years for vintage and classic motorcycling interests.

Mario was also asked to say how much he was being paid. Again, after prevarication, he said it was £18.40 an hour. Cliff Harris said the eventual aim was to recruit a General Manager at this rate. No information was proffered on how many hours he actually worked per week.

With the demise of the National Rally and its controls run by Sections, the need to ensure Sections meet up during the Waypoint Rally was raised.

The lunch was quite palatable and we each came away with a free spray bottle of VMCC branded motorcycle cleaner.

I spoke briefly afterwards to Mario and exchanged views politely and without rancour.

Although 'the plan' has been voted for, in my view it is so opaque that it is not clear what it really means, and Mario said, while the voting process was going on, that further changes were already afoot. So we will have to wait and see what happens next.

**2. Area Reps Meeting:** We had an area Reps meeting this week and the following items came up:

*Financial transparency:* We still have not seen the full accounts. The "Financial Report", which is usually available in the Members' Area on the website has not been published since May 2021. Cliff Harris, Finance and HR Director, says we will finish the year with a £90k loss but that break-even - or even a surplus - will be possible next year. It is not possible to assess these claims without seeing the latest financial reports and the budget for 2021/2022

*Teams:* There is much talk at AH about 'teams' set up for various things. The RAG, which I convene, had to give its terms of reference, membership and short and medium term objectives to the Board - and that is supposed to be on the VMCC website, but the membership and priorities of the other Teams like Marketing, Riding? etc. are not clear. This needs clarifying so we know who's doing what and can all talk to one another if necessary.

*Calendar.* The calendar of events is central to the Club's operations, activating things like insurance cover and enabling people to plan ahead for next year. Many members report experiencing difficulties uploading to the system. Please let me have your feedback.

*Handbook and insurances:* We had a long chat about this and we are determined to get the Board to clarify the terms of our various policies.

The impression has grown up that cover for Club officials in the event of harm and/or loss due to negligence on one of our events will only work if all the requirements in the handbook have been complied with (full signing on, written risk assessments and so on). I am pretty sure that this is not so. If there are specific warranties (exclusions) in the policies in relation to events these need to be written down by the insurers. The handbook is guidance to help officials - and which they are urged to consider and adapt as appropriate to the circumstances of their events etc. And it is also there to show our insurers that the Club is taking a responsible approach towards meeting its duties of care. It is however only guidance not the law.

The next draft which has been put together by a small group led by Neil Lewis, now makes this clear (and also includes a lot more useful information). It is now with the Board for them to show to the insurers.

There has been a lot of anxiety about this and it needs to be sorted out as soon as possible. (Perhaps, when the revised handbook is agreed, we can have an article in the Journal?)

My own view remains that if we all use common sense (not always so common!) and act reasonably we will be OK.

*Websites and Facebook book pages:* I am doing a survey of all Sections with websites and of ones that seem to use Facebook and other Social Media to publicise what they are doing. Some say the VMCC website template is not easy to use and some Sections buy their own. Social Media are not everyone's cup of tea but signposting those who wish to go down this route to those members in other Sections that are using this to their advantage might be useful. The SW Region have a Facebook page that Sections down there can feed into. Might one for Welsh Sections be worthwhile?

*New member experiences/expectations:* There is a lot of talk about 'marketing' VMCC membership but it might be useful if more Sections were able to feedback impressions and thoughts from new members on why they have joined and what they are looking for. My impression (and it is only that) is that most new members join because they already know other people in the Club rather than because of National advertising, although that has its place obviously. What is your experience?

*Awards:* The 2020 VMCC Awards were disrupted by COVID. It is important that nominations for those who have made outstanding contributions are received by post or via the VMCC website as soon as possible, not just to highlight what active members have done but to show what the VMCC at its true heart is all about. Please think who in your Section might be nominated. The ARs will be judging so please also copy your nominations to me for information (and in case they get lost in the bowels of AH!).

*Transport decarbonisation:* This is now coming over the horizon post COP26. Through RAG we want to get a consensus in the Club on how best we can argue for our right to go on riding old bikes, which are not just a vanishingly tiny part of the CO2 problem but are 'mobile heritage', are used sparingly for recreation and are not part of mainstream transport. RAG is putting together a discussion document. Let me know if you would you be interested in commenting.

Apologies for a rather long Email/shopping list but at the moment getting feedback on these sorts of things that really matter in the Club is more important than ever.

My best wishes,

Roger Bibbings

Area Rep Wales