

Review of 2008 AGM

It is important that activities are reviewed to see what lessons can be learned and what improvements can be made for the future. In this context the Board has reviewed the AGM and the following views expressed.

Preparation for the AGM

What was good

- Professional looking Annual Report prepared
- AGM materials sent out to members before the 21 day deadline
- AGM Agenda and Accounts produced despite very early Easter and tight schedule
- Good materials prepared (eg voting slips, proxy voting summary forms)

What can be improved

- Approval of EGM minutes should have been on the Agenda
- AGM Agenda should have contained information on how many Directors were to be elected
- AGM Agenda could usefully have included details of the skills and experience of those Directors who were not standing for election; perhaps guidance could be given to candidates in future as to what type of content should be included in their supporting statement
- The levy proposal should have been prepared earlier in the AGM preparation cycle
- More concrete supporting material should be made available with financial proposals (or at least made available for those interested)
- The meeting room was not available for inspection and approval by staff beforehand, this should be addressed for future General Meetings
- Lack of certainty about access to the camp due to levels of security-leading to a request to members to have photo-ID to gain access to the camp
- Although checked extensively by Council, Management and staff, the omission of medallists at the 2007 World Masters, (Liz Campbell (WAROC) Gold in the W50 event and Anne Donnell (BOK) Bronze in the W75 event) from the Roll of Honour was a serious omission; looking forward the 'template' of the Roll of Honour should include the World Masters which should reduce the chances of an omission being made.

At the AGM

What was good

- Attendance was largest for some years
- Check-in procedure was smooth, with minimal queues
- Start was almost on time
- Vote counting was done quickly, given the complicated nature of the Director voting system – thanks to Barry Elkington for 'volunteering' to be the 'scrutineer'
- The meeting was well chaired

What can be improved

- First 2 voting results had wrong percentages initially as "abstains" were included in total votes cast
- Some members attending may have felt frustrated by their inability to have substantive amendments to proposals accepted
- There was some criticism of the Membership Fees and Levies Fees being within one proposal, should these be split in the future? Note that there is no requirement in the Articles to take any Levy Fee changes to the AGM

Looking to the future

As well as addressing the "what can be improved" items, there are some observations that may help to stimulate a discussion, both at Board level, and with the wider membership.

There are a number of constraints on how the AGM is run:

1. The Articles of Association must be followed, which are strong on what amendments to proposals may be permitted.

2. There is a need to ensure a quorum (50 current members).
3. It would be inappropriate to allow binding decisions to be taken at an AGM where the full membership has not been aware of the proposals before the meeting.

There is a debate to be held around:

- a) members attending having meaningful discussions and the right to amend proposals – thereby making the AGM more meaningful to the attendees
- b) members not attending having the right to know what the proposals are and to know that significant amendments are not permissible – thereby making proxy voting meaningful

These two aspects of a General Meeting are to some extent juxtapositions that are potentially in conflict.

For some matters, it might appear that wider consultation before the final AGM proposal is formulated would assist - a sort of “green paper” approach. This would allow the Board to refine a proposal to take account of issues that were perhaps otherwise unknown, but if the final proposal addresses fully any concerns raised, it may reduce the likelihood of a quorum. However, satisfying the quorum requirement, albeit important, should not stop the Board ensuring that proposals are as well thought out as possible.

It may be that the Board should enter into dialogue with the members to seek to make the AGM an occasion where there is open dialogue between the Board and those members prepared to attend, but keeping the formal AGM part as brief as possible and only part of the planned two to three hour session.