

94th Meeting of the CLUB COUNCIL Minutes

Date/Time: Thursday 31st October 2024, commencing at 11:30am.

Venue: The Clermont Hotel, Charing Cross, The Strand, London, WC2N 5HX

Attendees: Geoff Gaunt, Club Leader - GG
Pete Gregory, Deputy Club Leader - PG
Janice Stace, Club Treasurer - JS
Ian Jarrett, Motoring Leader – IJ
Mike Biss, Motoring Groups Deputy Leader - MB
Graham Davis, Camping and Caravanning Leader - GD
Denise Knight, Local Groups Representative - DK
Mike Harrison, Co-opted Independent Council Member – MH

In Attendance: Brian Comber, Governor - BC
Bob Felton, Portsmouth Committee Member – BF
Phil Pallent, Sheffield Group Chairman - PP
Colin Slinn, Chief Executive Officer – CS
Gerard O'Sullivan, Association Chair – GO
Debbie Beaven, Non-Executive Director - DB
Kadie Crichton, Snr Marketing Mgr, Member Communities & Magazine – KC

MINUTES AND ACTIONS:

1. Opening Items – PG

Welcome and Introductions

1.1 Apologies

Apologies received from Jeff Kenyon, Bob Thomas, Trev Warren and Pete Worster.

1.2 Introductions

Colin Slinn, Gerard O Sullivan, Debby Beaven, Bob Felton, Phil Pallent, Brian Comber

1.3 Minutes of previous meeting

Accepted as true to record.

1.4 Actions and Matters Arising

Action No.	Description of Action	Who responsible?
1	PW to task Terry Midgley to look into this aspect on behalf of Boundless Motorsports (MSUK regulated) events. ONGOING	Pete Worster
2	KC to circulate the typical example emails which reveal the member benefits to members. ONGOING	Kadie Crichton

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3	GG/JS to feedback to Club Council on the board strategy day. COMPLETE Later in the agenda.	Geoff Gaunt and Janice Stace
4	PW to share a diagram of the new team structures at Brighton. ONGOING	Pete Worster
5	GG to confirm 2025 Club Council meeting dates and locations. COMPLETE Later in the agenda.	Geoff Gaunt

2. Strategy Presentation – GO

GO began by summarising the club’s strategic approach over the last three years, emphasising its core purpose of bringing people together to share experiences, values, and ideas. This social aspect of Boundless, he stated, has been central to its mission since its founding and remains the cornerstone of its strategy.

The strategy focused on three main components. Firstly, the club has worked on providing members with access to unique experiences, such as partnerships with Kew Gardens, WWT, Tastecard, Kids Pass, and exclusive member events. These experiences were designed to build on the principles of community and shared engagement that define Boundless.

Secondly, there has been a concerted effort to raise awareness of these offerings through digital advertising, Facebook campaigns and TV advertising. OG explained that Boundless has sought to make members and prospective members aware of the unique value it provides. OG noted that consistent "always-on marketing" has significantly improved the club's brand visibility and awareness.

Third area of focus has been on improving the club’s infrastructure. Investments in IT systems and back-end processes have made it easier for both new and existing members to engage with Boundless and its offerings.

GO highlighted the tangible outcomes of this strategy. Membership numbers have shown significant growth, with new members joining consistently, and retention rates remaining extremely high at 89%, which he noted was well above the industry standard of 75%. Year-one retention has also improved, with over 51% of new members choosing to stay beyond their first year. These successes have had a positive financial impact with increased membership income and margins enabling further reinvestment into club initiatives.

Volunteer efforts were also acknowledged, with over 350 club events organised last year. GO described these events as a phenomenal asset that sets Boundless apart, offering members unique opportunities for local and special-interest engagement. Looking ahead, GO stressed the importance of integrating club activities more fully into the core propositions of Boundless. By aligning club events and offerings with other aspects of the organisation we can aim to make club activities a central feature of the member experience.

IJ raised a key point about how club benefits are communicated to members. He noted that the current messaging around the groups could create the impression that members need to pay additional fees to join local and interest groups. IJ suggested rephrasing the language to emphasise access to local activities rather than groups/clubs.

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GO agreed that communication strategies should be revisited to ensure clarity. He also mentioned that the organisation is analysing successful models from other similar organisations to adapt and scale Boundless' offerings effectively.

GO concluded by outlining the next steps for the club, including further integrating club activities with Boundless' overall proposition and expanding the organisation's reach into adjacent areas that meet members' evolving needs. As well as addressing concerns around communication to ensure clarity and inclusivity. Building on the efforts of volunteers and leveraging existing partnerships will also remain a priority.

CS emphasised that the association was set up primarily for the club and he regards the Board, Club Council, etc as the current custodians of a 100 year legacy. CS explained it is the responsibility of the Board, Club Council and CMG to continue that success. Since lockdown, participation has increased, suggesting progress, but challenges remain.

CS explained that from 2000 to 2021, membership experienced a steady decline, losing 14,000-15,000 members annually. Discounts alone were not enough to retain members, especially with the rise of low-cost alternatives like the Blue Light Card. To address this, the association has shifted its strategy from being discount-focused to providing exclusive experiences. For example, partnerships with venues like Kew Gardens align with the club's focus on offering meaningful experiences and member engagement.

CS emphasised that the Boundless and Boundless Plus memberships are now strong propositions, offering £600 worth of benefits for £68 annually. Efforts are ongoing to enhance this value by targeting underrepresented regions and exploring new benefits to attract more members.

CS also stressed the importance of member retention, noting that longstanding benefits like LV insurance continue to be valuable. Despite rising costs, LV remains a competitive offering, and recent ownership changes to Allianz have resulted in stronger partnerships allowing for reinvestment in the club.

It was also noted that the association's pension scheme deficit, which had been a significant financial burden, is now near zero, paving the way for a potential buyout at minimal cost. CS explained that the financial strategy prioritises stability and reinvestment over profit maximisation to support long-term growth.

CS shared that the association recently achieved "Great Place to Work" accreditation, reflecting improvements in teamwork and culture. Moving forward, the focus will be on fostering innovation and experimenting with new ideas. For example, the association is exploring the feasibility of introducing a lower-cost membership product and aims to trial such initiatives quickly to gauge their effectiveness.

GD expressed concern that many club activities appear to be concentrated in Southern England, which may discourage membership growth in other regions. CS acknowledged this issue and explained that the club is actively working to diversify offerings geographically. CS mentioned that partnerships with WWT, and ongoing discussions with other organisations, as examples of efforts to secure more regionally inclusive benefits.

CS concluded by stating that the club's integration into the association's broader strategy remains a priority. The focus is on achieving financial stability, driving innovative growth and ensuring a balanced geographic spread of benefits and activities to support long-term success.

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GO highlighted the ongoing challenge of ensuring a broader geographic spread of club offers. GO referenced a recent Aviation Group event held in Scotland as an experimental starting point, despite low turnout. OS proposed exploring relationships with organisations in Wales and Scotland and potentially hosting an event to engage members in that region.

PP pointed out a recent influx of civil servants into the Darlington and Newcastle areas, identifying these regions as potential markets. PP suggested targeting new residents, including Treasury Department employees, to promote membership.

3. Club Leader Update – GG

GG recounted the board strategy day held in September, which focused on short, medium, and long-term goals for the association. He reflected on discussions about the research conducted by Pete Worster with the Civil Service Retirement Fellowship. This research highlighted that pre-retirement and post-retirement members value volunteering, purposeful activities and aging well.

GG also acknowledged the urgency of regenerating the club, especially after losing a few local groups this year. GG mentioned that KC was working on a volunteer survey to understand volunteer challenges and how we can better support their needs.

3.1 New SEN Process

GG introduced the topic of the new SEN process and requested feedback on how the process is working so far.

GD noted that while there had previously been numerous issues from the C&C side, there have been no complaints regarding the new SEN process. He added that despite the complexity of C&C rallies, completing the SENs have been straightforward so far. PP shared that he had completed three SENs for the 2025 rallies he will be involved in, in under seven minutes.

IJ mentioned that while the process hasn't been extensively used in motoring groups as yet, feedback from those who have tried it suggests it is more user-friendly.

GG expressed satisfaction with the positive feedback. Highlighting that the new process significantly reduces repetitive work for local groups, particularly for simpler events like club nights. However, he acknowledged that activities with higher risks, such as caravanning and motorsport, might involve additional complexities. KC confirmed that feedback from local and interest groups has been positive so far.

IJ flagged issues with potential duplication in risk assessments for motoring and motorsport groups. He noted overlap between the Motorsport UK (MSUK) application process and the Member Communities' event risk assessments. However, he is collaborating with KC and the Health & Safety team at head office to address this. KC confirmed ongoing discussions with the Health and Safety team to streamline the risk assessment process for MSUK-permitted events to prevent duplication. GG thanked the motorsports group for their collaboration on the process.

3.2 Member Communities Team

GG announced Ally's departure from the Member Communities Team and requested patience during the recruitment of two new team members.

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KC added that they are recruiting replacements for Ally and addressing gaps left by Joselyn's part-time role. KC assured the Council that Benita will handle general queries and expenses, whilst other matters can be directed to Kadie or Joselyn in the meantime.

3.3 Health & Safety Incidents

No incidents or concerns were reported.

3.4 2025 Club Council Dates/Venues

GG mentioned that the 2025 Club Council meeting dates are yet to be finalised but will be shared within two weeks. KC confirmed the 2025 meetings are planned for early March, mid-June, and mid-October and noted they will remain in Birmingham to facilitate face-to-face discussions.

GG highlighted that the March meeting's focus will be on strategy development. GG emphasised the importance of in-person meetings to encourage debate.

IJ suggested submitting papers before meetings for review to save time during discussions. GG agreed, stating that reports can be shared in advance to allocate meeting time for decision-making and strategic discussions. PG supported the idea of circulating reports beforehand, reducing the need for extensive discussions during meetings.

4. Decision Items - JS

4.1 Service Recognition Policy Paper

JS raised the issue of inconsistency in recognising contributions across regions. She proposed creating a standardised approach to ensure fairness, especially for members who have significantly contributed to Boundless, regardless of their tenure.

IJ endorsed the proposal and suggested including references to Club Awards and explore the possibility of life membership for long-serving members. JS mentioned the Volunteer Recognition Fund's plan for a get-together to distribute awards ensuring wider recognition.

GG supported cross-referencing the Service Recognition Policy with Club Award guidelines. GG emphasised recognising significant contributions before members step down. GD noted that general committee members may lack awareness of the Club Award and the importance of reminding committees of its availability.

5. Any other business – All

None

6. Date of Next Meeting – GG

Confirmed meeting will be in March, date to come.

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93rd Meeting of the CLUB COUNCIL ACTIONS

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