



Explorer Scout Leader Meeting

Monday 2nd December 2013

8.00pm – 10.25pm

District HQ, off Woodland Close, Boxmoor

1. Present

Russ Dyble (chairing), Robin Smith (ESL, Snooks), Mark Knapton (ESL, Noctuum), Alan Oxtoby (ESL, Raging Moose), David Gilden, Kieran Murphy, Thomas Scarsbrook, Frank Monnington, Richard Hirons, Dan Nathan, Tim d'Arcy, Aimee Hart (DofE adviser), Maureen Shelley (DESA)

Apologies for absence

Russell Head (ADC 14-25), Adam Harris, Chris West, Liz Walker (ACC 14-25), Sue Barnwell (review group)

2. Managing and supporting the Explorer Scout and Scout Network sections

Russ outlined the arrangements for managing and supporting the Explorer Scout and Scout network sections from 1st December 2013 – see below.

District Explorer Scout Commissioner

Rich Hirons has previously announced he will step down as DESC due to time pressure at work – he wishes to continue to support the section, especially the young leader scheme and weekend activities. He will stand down officially as of 1st December 2013.

Assistant District Commissioner 14-25

Russell Head took on the role in the Summer term and since the start of Autumn had been actively visiting sections and supporting sections (having been waiting for a meeting with Rich) and engaging with parents, Scout Leaders, GSLs and Explorer Scouts.

You will have seen the email I forwarded about Russell's current health – as a result, I envisage Russell will take a break until sometime in the Spring term at least.

I will cover his responsibilities during this period.

District Explorer Scout Leader

I have appointed Frank as a District Explorer Scout Leader (DESL), with effect from 1st December (subject to approval by the appointments advisory committee). His responsibilities will be to co-ordinate the weekly programme (supporting evenings where required), weekend activities and linking events.

District Explorer Scout Administrator

Maureen is willing to continue in this role and will take on the day-to-day management of the Explorer Scout accounts, as well as continuing to manage membership records etc.

District Scout Network Leader

I have appointed Robin as District Scout Network Leader (DSL), with effect from 1st January (subject to approval by the appointments advisory committee). He will continue to hold the role of ESL until the end of the Summer term but arrangements will need to be made to find a new ESL for Tuesday evenings.

Geoff Angell will continue to be involved in the section, as will Kirsty (current chair) and Kieran.

3. Matters arising from September 2013 meeting

Attendance records

Please see attached OSM report for Autumn 2013

Over 30 Explorer Scouts have attended fewer than 5 sessions this term – the team shared knowledge about some of the reasons why for individuals and agreed that Maureen and Russ would follow them up.

It was agreed that a more regular attendance should be expected, particularly from those young people signed up to attend Locheanhead in Summer 2014. It was felt that the proposals in item 4 would help with this.

Young Leader Scheme

Attendance at November session was 30+, Sandra doing an excellent job at chasing/placing young leaders with sections.

Plan is to run one training evening per term, covering every module each time, with YLs moving through in a similar way to the adult "training train".

Suggest sessions are either all on Monday evenings or rotated Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday

Agreed that sessions would rotate Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday through the year and that the usual unit evenings would run on the nights YL training was run but that young leaders were to be encouraged to attend the training, not the unit evening.

4. Structure of Units / Membership

Maintaining flexibility of choice, increasing courtesy shown to leaders

Russ explained that the proposals below have been arrived at after consulting with GSLs, SLs, parents, explorer scouts (more informally) and lengthy discussions with many of the explorer leader team (particularly the leaders of the three unit).

Russ also stressed that he wasn't suggesting change simply for the sake of changing things, it was to address concerns/irritations and acknowledged that plenty of good Scouting was going on – these arrangements are to bring a bit more consistency to the organisational side of things (e.g. Locheanhead sign-up success).

1. Each Explorer Scout is registered to the unit(s) they intend to attend most regularly, with an expectation that they attend or apologise to the leader of that unit. Apologising in advance for multiple weeks is entirely acceptable if an Explorer Scout is coming up to exam season or has another commitment.
This was agreed – this will be communicated to all Explorer Scouts through December and January via post, email and attending the first few sessions in January.
It was agreed unfair and unnecessary to impose a limit on the number of attendees in the current batch but left as an option to explore if required at a later date.
2. The Explorer Scout Leader(s) of the unit they are registered with are responsible for helping Maureen maintain up-to-date contact details for the individual and speaking with them about the process of moving on the Scout Network when the time is come.
This was agreed – we will use OSM to see who is due to move up and prompt ESLs.
3. Explorer Scouts still have the choice to attend any evening on the programme, but in order to do so should contact the leader on that night in order they can accommodate additional numbers or say that it is not possible (if it is part of a series of evenings or would take the evening over a limit of attendees).
This was agreed

“Personality” of each unit

Russ explained that these proposals would also build on the “introductory skills sessions” the district plan to run for Scouts in climbing, kayaking, hillwalking, target sports etc and would provide a logical “route” for young people with a particular interest.

As a result of concerns raised about the balance of evening programmes between the units, I propose that each unit has a “specialism” – water activities (Tuesday), climbing (Wednesday) and hillwalking (Thursday) initially which builds on the introductory skills sessions running in the Scout section.

This was NOT agreed – it was felt each unit should cover a range of activities, responding to the level of skill within the unit by differentiating the activity.

4. Each unit should aim to spend 10-12 sessions per year on their “specialist” activity, with one weekend activity where Explorers can enjoy the activity and/or challenge themselves (e.g. Three Peaks)
No longer relevant as the proposal was NOT agreed
5. All other evenings would provide a balanced programme within each unit (general Scouting skills, community projects, social, creative and global activities).
This was agreed and it was clarified that whilst Wednesday may focus more on explorers achieving permits for activities at Phasels, that didn't stop any unit using the activities in their weekly programme.
It was also agreed that all three units should run a programme which balances over the term/year and it was less therefore not necessary to continue to take turns in being the first unit to publish programmes.
Frank's role as DESL will include helping each unit achieve a balance.

Funding for the section

Recognising that a good Explorer Scout programme relies on a number of weekend activities, we must ensure that finance is not a barrier to people being able to commit to being Explorer Scout Leaders, so I propose

6. We establish a policy of adults only paying for food and activities they participate in with other costs being spread between the price of Explorers taking part, build these costs into the membership subscriptions or subsidise them from reserves.
This was agreed – it was felt that where possible the event should be self-funding but that it may be necessary to take some funds from reserves if this would make the event too expensive and prohibit take-up.

This policy will mean we need to be clearer about the number of adults required for each activity.

7. Units will agree a budget for their “specialist activity” with the DESL, with an equal amount of money allocated to each unit to provide their other weekly programme sessions out of.
No longer relevant as proposal 4 and 5 were NOT agreed
8. It may be appropriate for the leader team in each unit to charge extra for some evenings but this should be kept to once or twice per term maximum.
This was agreed – noting that sometime charging for food activities helped focus the Explorers

Location of Snooks ESU

With the majority of Scouts from 1st Kings Langley joining Noctua we have one and a half units in Kings Langley and just “half” a unit based in the town where there are 4 or 5 scout troops, I propose that:

9. Snooks ESU settles permanently at the District HQ in Boxmoor.
This was agreed – Russ to liaise with the two groups to inform them and make appropriate arrangements.
Robin noted that access to the Explorer's cupboard at Boxmoor was often obscured – Russ said he would speak to the group about this as well.

Communicating the programme / weekend activities

Based on the varying use of the Facebook group by the different units (and events/info often being added at 24-48 hours notice), we reduce the reliance on the group as the primary form of communication:

10. The programme, letters about activities and other communication are sent to young people (and copied to parents) by email through OSM – a notification on Facebook to check their email accounts would be good.
This was agreed – Tim in particular (with others in agreement) felt that Facebook was still a preferred method for quite a number of Explorer Scouts so it was agreed to continue to publicise weekly events through this medium though this would perhaps be less important given the agreement to proposal 1 which will set the expectation of regular attendance at a unit meeting.
11. The HHEX Facebook group continue to be used to share photographs and give reminders – but reliance on the “event” feature
This was agreed – but see above
12. We use Online Scout Manager’s “My.Scout” facility to take manage signup and payments for weekend activities (we are exploring the use of this system to manage subscriptions too).
This was agreed – Maureen, Frank and Russ to continue to explore this option and set up for January

Increasing youth involvement in the programme

13. Each unit should hold a structured programme planning session towards the end each term in order to help them plan their programme for the following term. Some ideas should be given as a choice between X, Y and Z (guided choice), some should come from the Explorers themselves (moderated choice) and others should come from choosing detail from a framework – i.e. “we’re doing pioneering for two weeks, which project would you like to do?” (directed choice).
This was agreed
14. Some evenings should be run by members themselves – this will require leaders to provide support in planning and organising (probably more work than running the evening themselves in the first instance) and numbers attending these evening should be restricted to registered members of that unit to aid planning.
This was agreed

Linking Events

15. Once per term, a unit holds a linking event, followed by all three units running two weeks where the programme is suitable for newbies.
This was agreed – suggested as the last week of the penultimate month of the term (e.g. last week of November so enough weeks in December for Scouts to visit each unit once).
16. A good relationship with feeder troops to understand the style of scouting the Scouts are used to and the sharing of equipment / camps etc to be encouraged.
This was agreed – 1st Kings Langley were mentioned as having been particularly supportive with the loan of equipment and it was felt it would be beneficial to continue this relationship despite moving Snooks away from meeting there regularly.
17. Suggest sessions are either all on Monday evenings or rotated Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday
It was agreed that we would rotate these between Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (plus Monday/Friday if a unit were to open on those evenings) – effectively a regular weekly unit meeting with some additional potential members joining in.
18. A team of adults to support the weekend sessions are identified to reduce the reliance on adults in the Explorer Scout section who are already committed on a weekly basis.
This was agreed – Russ reported than Chris Tems (ADC Activities) had recently held a meeting with over 20 adults interested in achieving various activity permits who would be willing to support events such as DofE expedition and activity weekends to gain experience. Russ/Frank to liaise with Chris on this.

5. Programme Planning – Spring 2014

Fire & Ice - 17th/19th January 2014 – **agreed and booked for 2014**
 Southern 50 - 15th/16th February ? – **decided not to attend this and focus on Chiltern Challenge**
 Chiltern Challenge – 1st/2nd March 2014 ? – **agreed, info not out [released the following day]**
 Sports Relief Athletics Day – 23rd March ? – **agreed, Explorers should participate not be asked to help**
 Renewal of Promise Event – 23rd April 2014 ? – **agreed, Explorers should participate and offered the chance to help if needed and they would like to.**
 Linking event – **Frank/ESLs to set dates**
 Young Leader training – **Frank/Sandra to set dates**
 D of E dates – **Frank/Aimee to set dates**

6. Programme Planning – Summer 2014

Awards evening – 8th May – **to note**
 District AGM – 22nd May – **hoping to repeat the activities for Explorers again to encourage them to attend AGM**



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Scout Community Week - 2nd/8th June ? – to note

Gilwell24 – to be decided at January meeting

Lochearnhead pre-camp – 21st/22nd June – to note

Nimrod – 5th/6th July – want to ask the Scout section to lead this, with Explorer input

Lochearnhead expedition – to note

7. Programme Planning – Autumn 2014

District camp – 12th/14th September – to note

County Cub Night Hike ? – to be decided at April meeting

Peak Assault ? – Agreed, discussion took place about entering training teams with supporting adults if this would help increase attendance plus the need to explain/encourage and aim for signup in the Summer term.

Theme Park Camp – to be decided at January meeting

Fireworks – 5th November @ Hobbs Hill Wood ? – to be decided at April meeting

Green Beret – 15th – 16th November @ Gilwell Park ? – to be decided at May meeting

8. Moving up from Scouts

We are expecting a total membership of approximately 110 in the Spring term and up to 125 by Easter.

Russ briefly showed the OSM section size prediction graph and explained that Ed Jellard (owner of OSM) was coming to speak to GSLs and Group Chairs on 4th February as Russ would prefer all groups to use OSM to manage their data in order to comply with the Association's move to an online database in 2014 and assist with the moving on process from Scouts to Explorers and Explorers to Network.

Current predictions suggest a fourth unit may be needed in late 2014 or early 2015.

9. Equipment

Anything need to be requested from outside the Explorer budget (district budget meeting 14th Oct)

Russ and Frank will liaise on the budget

It was noted that extra storage space would be useful and lighting in the container preferable too.

10. Dates of future meetings

Tuesday 7th January – all sections meeting at HHW (programme to be complete by this date)

Wednesday 30th April – Explorer Leaders Meeting (programme to be complete by this date)

Thursday 4th September – all sections meeting at HHW (programme to be complete by this date)

These dates were agreed – unit meetings wont be held on these evenings so as to reduce the number of additional nights asked of leaders.