

## OPEN FORUM

### Executive Present:

**Mike Burley: MB**  
**Tony McCoy: TM**  
**Steve Love: SL**  
**Maureen Pillinger:**  
**John Gough: JG**  
**Mark Durham: MD**

Open Forum started at 11.53am

**Lee Poxon (Club 953):** Please could the Executive give the requirements for the other Awards not mentioned in AGM.

**MB:** There are a number of other awards but because of a lack of nominations the Executive were not able to give them out. The Executive will put further information on the website, but next year, please let the Executive know of your nominations for awards. The following awards are available:

- Golden Region Award
- Ken Tyler Award for any instructor, SAA member, that does a reasonable amount of work for the SAA instructing for a region or club.
- Conservation Award
- Bronze Award
- Silver – meritorious award
- 500 Club – Honorary award.
- National Life Saving Award – only awarded once.

**Neil Craig (Club 642)** – Why not put it an extra section to make nominations on the club renewal forms?

**MB:** Suggestion noted.

**Mark Berrill (Club 128)** – suggested that people may not know how to make a nomination or the qualifications for nominations, and this may be the reason for the lack of nominations this year.

**Neil Craig (Club 642)** – please give us an update on training materials that are being renewed, in particular the Club Diver and Instructor courses.

**SL:** A fantastic amount of work has been done in several areas. Regarding the Toolbox, there was a perception that it took a long time to get new divers into the water compared with the PADI & BSAC courses. There has been an analysis of the three training regimes. We are not far away from BSAC in getting divers into the water, in terms of classroom hours and the swimming pool. We are (very very) slightly behind in getting people in the water in the first place but are equal at Sport Diver / Club Diver level. When we looked at the Toolbox and how it works, the problem we had was when you fire it up and go through the slides, the transitions are very slow, the whole system is too complex and goes away from what Powerpoint is about (bullet points leading to discussion of issues by the instructor). Steve and Janice Roach spent a lot of time on it and it is now done. The content of the Toolbox was fantastic and very fit for purpose, but it was difficult for an instructor to present it. The slide numbers have now been reduced from 1700 to 1300, but that is still an awful lot, although it covers from the start to Dive Supervisor level. The Toolbox is now slicker, a lot of information has been taken from the slides and put in instructor notes. Anyone presenting needs to print it off first, and can use the Instructor notes as a guide. The content needs to be delivered but it is up to the instructor how it is communicated. It is designed for instructors to bring their personal experiences to illustrate what they have experienced first hand. There are only a limited number of discs available today, but active training clubs were invited to collect one that day. One will be distributed to every representative and active training club.

The Club Instructor and Open Water instructor courses have been revamped a bit. The content has not been significantly altered, but the exams have been brought up to date. There was nothing fundamentally wrong with

them, they were just a little outdated. The presentations have been in the same Powerpoint format as the Toolbox. There is more emphasis on duty of care and risk assessments. The biggest change is how the candidates are assessed and the amount of information the candidates get about the assessment process. They now get sheets that the assessor would use to assess. Steve has consulted widely and used feedback when deciding this. The entry criteria are a lot more transparent now. In order to go on a Club Instructor course, you will need to be a club diver. In the Candidates Pack and Explanations, you now need to prove that you are a club diver and show a club qualification book that has been stamped with all your dives. If you have not got your own documentation in order you will not be allowed on the course. This is all outlined in the Candidates Pack and if you choose not to read it, then you are not prepared to be an instructor. The aim is to be tighter, slicker and more transparent. Representatives, rather than Clubs, will get a copy of the Club Instructor and Open Water Instructor cd's because they put on the courses. They will also get the exams and answers to the exams.

**Dave Peet (Club 1105)** – When running club instructor courses, he has noticed time pressures in some situations. Some instructors are not used to public speaking and struggle with it. By the time they get to assessed presentations they are very nervous. He had to rework the timetable to give them more time in the classroom.

**SL:** The timetable is only a guide. Steve is happy for Course Co-ordinators to rework it as they see fit. It is a key ability of an instructor to keep to time, but there may be some latitude in the timetable.

**Dave Peet (Club 1105)** – Newly qualified Club Instructors may meet the course requirements, but they still struggle.

**SL:** This has not been Steve's experience personally although he accepted that may be the case and is happy for the timetable to be reworked within reason.

**Lee Poxon (Club 953):** Since a Regional Rep can be any diving grade, is it right that they are being given answers to higher grades than they may have reached?

**SL:** Yes. Do we trust our reps? Is it an issue? The number of reps currently and historically to whom that particular issue might apply is very small. It has been considered. Should SAA not give instructor disks out to people not qualified to that level? It is difficult logistically. In the worst case scenario, the only advantage would be in the written exam which few people actually fail. So the benefit of access to questions is not that important, as the primary assessment is how the candidate does in practice. The candidate may get 100% in the written paper, but still fail practical assessment.

**Ray Wrather (Club43):** Should active national instructors receive the answers as well as reps?

**SL:** Regional Reps have responsibility for all courses, therefore they have the disks. There is no problem with National Instructors having the disk, but it's the Regional Reps who put on the courses. The information could be copied and passed to the instructors, although Steve would prefer that too many copies were not in circulation because they could be disseminated further and wider than anticipated. That is an issue for the Reps to decide.

**Neil Kenley (Club 498) :** Feels it is wrong that any diver in the association to have access to an exam which is at a higher level.

**SL:** That is a perfectly valid view and Steve has explained his rationale.

**Roy Brown (Club 985):** There is one concern re regional courses, particularly in the regions, that members come to do a course without forms signed by the diving officer, so instructors are signing the forms. Someone turned up with Nitrox Divers Certificate without having done the course.

**SL:** The National Course application form has got to be countersigned by the Club Diving Officer, otherwise they could be disqualified and lose their money. Is it an issue with the number of people going on courses that we have. There is now in place a rigorous checking process at head office where everything is checked and double checked. This is coordinated by Regional Instructors, where the instructors are qualified. Steve agreed that the form would be redesigned to include space for a printed name and signature and club stamp. This is necessary to be on the safe side and meet with insurance requirements. If the form isn't filled in correctly, the candidate will be unable to do the course.

**Alan Richardson (Club 702):** It is okay provided the candidate can provide competency. The rules state you cannot go on a course without the approval of the Club DO, because that would be outside of the insurance guidelines. What if there is a problem between DO and candidate?

**SL:** It is up to them to sort it out, only the DO at their club can approve them for a course.

**Dave North (Club 1007):** The Diving Officer has a legal responsibility.

**SL:** We are an association of independent clubs, but the responsibility sits with the club Diving Officer. If there are any issues between you club DO, you could move club.

**David North (Club 1007):** The Club or Diving Officer could make representations to Club Rep to resolve any issues.

**SL:** Yes, but that is not the concern of the Course Coordinator.

**Richard Grice (Club 349):** Suggested a page on the forum that applies for Club Instructors and Open Water instructors.

**MD:** We have the technology to do this and it is something that could be raised at the next NDO's conference. It may soon be possible to share resources with other groups. Mark suggested he put the Open Water Instructor Course pack on the website and let people have access to it. This is not ready yet though. The technology is moving at a slow pace at the moment, but we are getting there.

**SL:** Last year's NDO conference in Warrington was very good and very well attended with a reasonable cross-section of members vocalising the issues that affected them. This helped shape the two instructor courses mentioned.

**SL:** This year's NDO conference will be held on Saturday 13 November at the RNLI HQ in Poole. It will be held on 12 November 2011 at County Hotel, Carnforth in Lancashire. Diving will be available at both conferences. No speakers or themes have been confirmed yet, but please be aware of the dates.

**Neil Craig (Club 642):** Today we received a great award. How do the Executive plan to pass good news messages to clubs so that clubs know how to bring new members in?

**MD:** The Executive have discussed sharing best practices throughout clubs to make more successful clubs. We rely on clubs to feed this into Head Office so Irene can send out mail shots and put information on the website. We have hired a consultant to come in and put a pack together for all clubs on how to market in local region and what you can do to take your club forward.

**SL:** The consultant, Roz Lunn, works professionally in PR, and gave a presentation at last year's NDO's conference. She gave the benefit of her experience in that area which was well received with good ideas. She has given the SAA a document that distils what she talked about.

**SL:** On 9 July there will be a weekend of national events, as discussed at the last Council meeting. The regions in 4 areas will come together and each charter a boat for the benefit of clubs in the area. Every club will have access to a boat and there will be flags on the boats. The North East and Yorkshire will be working together; the Southern clubs are coming together, as are Scotland and the West coast. This is a work in progress that will be managed by the regional reps and not Head Office.

**Albert Cartwright (Club 646):** Are we going to pursue the single membership?

**MB:** This issue was brought up and voted upon at last year's AGM and thrown out by members, therefore the Executive have not pursued it. Personally I think direct membership may have some use. If the members wish to propose it then we can follow it up.

**Albert Cartwright (Club 646):** I would like to propose it.

**SL:** If a direct member wanted to train on a regional course, they would need to be a member of an SAA club. The proposal as it stood for direct membership enabled individuals to dive under SAA insurance, without being a member of an SAA club. It was to facilitate those members who had moved away and there wasn't a club in reasonable travelling distance. One way to retain membership is to allow them to come back at a later date. The consensus of opinion is that it has merit. The Executive proposed the idea twelve months ago, and it was rejected by members. We felt it was not appropriate to propose the motion again. If member wants to propose it at a future AGM, that is fine.

**Dick Newton (Club 2):** There is nothing to stop a member using another club.

**SL:** It is not the purpose of the open forum to go into the nitty-gritty of SAA direct. If you feel it is an issue, feed it into the reps and bring it to the next NDO meeting.

**MB:** There is room to allow some divers who just dive in the summer. What do you want us to do? If asked to look into it, we will.

**Roy Brown (Club 985):** Something like this that has been previously voted at an AGM, can only be altered by a vote at the AGM.

**SL:** The proposal was thrown out at last AGM, the SAA cannot bring a new category of membership in without a positive vote at an AGM, however there is nothing to stop the SAA looking at an alternative membership category..

**Roy Brown:** Can we get an idea today of the level of support?

**SL:** If you would like us to look into it, we will.

**JG:** This issue has come up several times. At first the Executive were against it. Five years later, things have changed, we decided that with declining membership we needed to look at it again. It was proposed to you again and thrown out.

**MB:** Asked for a vote for those in favour of SAA to look into the issue and review it, by a show of hands.  
In favour – 21  
Against – 33  
Abstentions – 4

Therefore the Executive will not look into it because it is your association.

**Janet Fitton (Club 985):** How many individuals have enquired about taking out insurance?

**Irene:** This question is asked on a weekly basis, it is something people want to know about.

**Albert Cartwright:** It was also asked a lot at the Dive Show.

**Ian Pilling:** There is nothing to say that someone can't propose it and do the legwork to get the majority to vote for at next AGM.

**MB:** Fine, but the Executive cannot instigate it.

**TM:** Many people have contacted me about taking disabled people out for try dives. There is no awareness of disability diving, which has been done on a club basis where disabilities have been relatively minor. It is possible that one of the clubs may want to take on a paraplegic and there is no guidance from the SAA. Tony is going to write guidelines on how to do a disability course. If anyone is planning a try dive, please contact him before they go ahead. There are now more military injuries where people lack use of legs or arms. There are only four Handicapped Scuba Instructors in the UK, and Tony is one of them. There is only a small licensed community to take disabled people diving. He is worried that clubs have good intentions but they may cause themselves and the disabled diver harm.

**Marguerite St Leger Dowse:** Is Tony aware that the DDRC produced a comprehensive report on this?

**TM:** Yes, he has seen it.

**SL:** Gave an update on the junior diver Policy. The policy was brought out with the best guidance and advice available to the Executive. The restrictions on junior divers put us out of step with other training agencies. As part of a scheduled review of policies we asked the UK Sport Diving Medical Committee to give us their view of our policy, which included putting restrictions on junior divers which other agencies do not do. They unanimously felt it was good idea. They suggested an amendment to our disclaimer for parents to sign, which notifies them of a risk of injury, with the suggestion that they also say risk death. The Executive feels that an injury may include death. Therefore the restrictions on junior divers remain. The reps have been informed of this. We are the only agency that has got specific limits that are lower than adults.

**Martin Hogg (Club 879 ):** Medically if someone goes for a procedure, you are warned of very rare side effects, so I think you need to put death in. Most people when reading “injury” think of a sprain or cut, but most people don’t think of death.

**SL:** Thank you, we will consider that.

**Ernie Samuels (Club 421 ):** The Junior divers policy affects those diving for five days, but some will dive with other clubs after the first few days.

**SL:** As an association we have to do right by the juniors and follow medical advice. If they disregard our advice, that is for the parents and clubs and individuals. If they chose to do that, we can’t stop them, but they will be outside SAA guidance and insurance.

The Open Forum closed at 1pm.