

Expensive groups

Since the last committee meeting, Janet and I have had a further discussion about the best way to take this matter forward.

Membership data

Our first concern is the (lack of) accuracy of group membership data on Beacon. If each group's cost is to be measured as pounds per member per annum, the "per member" part of this calculation is important.

We have agreed that we should wait until November to determine how many members each group has. This has two advantages:

- i) Annual membership renewals should be done and dusted, as should the bulk of new members who join with effect from the start of September.
- ii) It gives us time to carry out a data cleanse on Beacon.

Group attendance

Notwithstanding the previous point, we need to agree how we will count each group's members. Should it be the number who sign up for the group or the number who actually attend each meeting? The latter figure will of course fluctuate.

Timescale

During the July committee meeting, Rod suggested that any expensive group surcharge (or whatever we choose to call it) could be introduced with effect from the start of 2023. Having given the matter further thought however, we both think such a surcharge should not apply until September 2023.

Our reasons are as follows:

- i) It gives all concerned a lot more time. Leaders of expensive groups will need time to discuss options with their members and agree what, if anything, they are going to do. Both of us support the path the committee has chosen, but we need to take group leaders and members with us.
- ii) If a surcharge were introduced before September 2023, members could justifiably complain that we were moving the goalposts mid-year. Some might decide to leave, and would then feel even more cheated when we refused to refund part of their annual membership fee.

Further, we are in the fortunate position of having far more money in the bank than we currently need. Why, a member might ask, is there a rush to implement surcharges so quickly?

Group leaders' options

Group leaders may come up with other ideas themselves, but we can put the following forward. The options are not mutually exclusive.

- a) Reduce the frequency of meetings.
- b) Hold (some) meetings using Zoom.
- c) Use a less expensive venue.
- d) If members want more meetings than we are prepared to fund, allow them to pay the additional cost themselves.

The next step

It has already been agreed that Janet will arrange another group leaders' meeting after the AGM. We recommend this opportunity is taken to outline our thinking to the Group Leaders, so that they have time to get used to the idea of what we are planning to do.