STEP CHAPTERS

It will be recalled that the principle of chapters (which may or may not become full branches) was developed by the New Branches Working Party last year and subsequently adopted by Council as part of the business plan. Support for the idea was reaffirmed at the May meetings of the Development Committee and Council.

Authority for this concept now needs to be reflected in our constitutional documents, and in September 2009 Council agreed that this can be provided (a) by agreeing to amend the definition of ‘Branch’ in section 1 of the current Prescribed Branch Regulations and (b) by adding a chapter regulation as a new section 5 in those Regulations. (Other appropriate amendments to reflect the introduction of chapters will be made when the Regulations are overhauled in the near future.)

(a) The current definition reads: “Branch is a group of members who come together (whether as an incorporated body or an unincorporated body) in any Region for the purpose of the furtherance of the objects of the Society and are recognised as such by the Membership Committee. For the purposes of these Regulations any reference to a Branch shall include a Branch in Formation.”

The amendment agreed by Council is that the last three words of the above should be replaced by the following: “Chapter, save that any regulations relating to Chapters and agreed by Council shall take precedence in the event of conflict.”

(b) The following chapter regulation was approved:

- Chapter status may or may not lead to branch status, but is not seen as appropriate for those branches which having once enjoyed full branch status have for one reason or another lost that status.

- A formal proposal for chapter status should include the following:
  - a statement of actual/potential Members in the area (the normal expectation being that there exists the potential for a membership of between 12 and 50)
  - details of leadership arrangements (including chapter chairman, treasurer, secretary and other committee members)
  - details of the mentoring arrangements envisaged (normally to be provided by a neighbouring branch)
  - a programme for the development of activities (including in particular CPD, events, member recruitment, and – where appropriate – education)
  - a statement, where relevant, of steps to be taken to address any language/translation issues (with costings)
  - an indication of any potential alliances with other relevant organisations
  - a budget, failing which a note on any financial implications (based on an assumption of eventual self-sufficiency)
  - an undertaking to comply with the branch charter, Prescribed Branch Regulations and other rules agreed by Council
• a timetable for elevation to branch status (where this is targeted), according to the agreed criteria for that status
• evidence that the chapter is located in a jurisdiction which is in sufficient compliance with the requirements of transparency, good business practice, the rule of law and international regulation

- Chapters shall normally have voting rights and the right of attendance at the annual branch chairmen’s assembly, and shall develop appropriate rules for their own activities and governance (compatible with the Prescribed Branch Regulations). These shall include the opening and operation of bank accounts (with mentoring branch or STEP Worldwide signatures required).

- Chapters shall be listed alongside but separately from branches on the website, in the Directory and other relevant publications.

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