

## **BACKGROUND PAPER**

### **Introduction**

Convened at the instigation of the Council's Admin Committee, a conference was held at Wellesbourne on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2011 to discuss factors affecting the future of ringing. Aspects of the wide ranging discussion were reported in the Ringing World issue of 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Subsequently several meetings have been held by Chairman of the Conference, Elva Ainsworth, together with Chairman of the Education Committee, Peter Dale, and Vice President, Chris Mew to review the ideas and views that the Conference elicited and to establish ways in which plans for the future might be taken forward. The Ringing Foundation, Ringing Centres Committee, Education Committee and others have been consulted. This paper has been produced to put before Council Members the issues at stake and proposals for action.

### **1 Key Issues**

#### **a) The universal problems arising from an ageing profile of ringers and the difficulties in recruiting and retaining new ringers especially those below 30.**

There is an urgent need for outreach to new sources both for young people and adults.

#### **b) The means to attract new recruits and retain them.**

Local ringers need to be provided with up to date tools and techniques for recruiting people who will become reliable ringers.

The leadership role is crucial at all levels for the successful retention of learners of whatever age. New learners of any age need to feel part of the team and be seen to play their part.

#### **c) Involvement of young people at all stages of their ringing lives from initial recruitment to their part as future leaders.**

There is a fundamental advantage at recruitment stage in attracting a peer group of friends and the use of young ringers groups to enable them to ring with people their own age. Additional incentives can be provided by local or national award schemes.

#### **d) Raising standards of teaching and as a corollary future ringing.**

One of the chief discouragements to new learners is occasioned by poor teaching standards whether in bell handling or the later stages.

This is probably one of the most difficult problems to address since it involves individual habits, pride and local custom. In some cases the very suitability of the teachers might come into question and the local society may wish to address this.

Instead of working alone, more could be achieved through teams of instructors working together, whether informally within local group of towers or in a more formal ringing or teaching centre.

Quite apart from the teaching capability the whole environment of belfries and their relative welcome needs to be improved, as well as the availability of appropriate facilities.

**e) The funding of equipment and training that would assist in achieving the above aims and the means of fund raising.**

Relatively little is raised for recruitment and teaching of ringers although this is one of the aims of the Ringing Foundation. Each society should consider setting up separate funds specifically for recruitment and training purposes where monies can be seen to benefit local ringers.

**f) Ways in which the existing organisational structure of ringing at national level can be improved to assist local initiatives for a healthy ringing future.**

Change is essential for the survival of ringing. The Council's role as a supporter of local ringing needs to be orientated to that purpose.

At present there are a number of Council Committees, the Ringing Foundation and recently the Association of Ringing Teachers, each with an interest in recruitment and training. There are some areas of overlap and other areas that are not covered. There is a need for a more effective structure and improved co-ordination.

The Forum for Recruitment and Training would consist of the members of the relevant Council Committees, the Directors of the Ringing Foundation and the Officers of the Association of Ringing Teachers. The Forum would be charged with reviewing the existing organisation structure and presenting proposals to the next Council meeting on how this could be changed to make to more effective and to implement such changes as might be needed.

Whilst the initial meeting might be quite large, the Forum would be free to decide how best to proceed making use of modern communication methods and team working to achieve its aims.

The complex issues which are at stake require a broader involvement than can be achieved either at the main Council Meeting or in individual Committees. Long term recruitment and training aims can be achieved by collaboration and agreement on sensible actions in support of those aims.

## **2 Possible or impossible?**

In any proposals for securing the future of ringing there are a number of aspects over which the Council has no direct control:-

- i. A National recruitment drive **can** be achieved with the consent and co-operation of local societies but trainers need to be in place.
- ii. Most tower bell installations are in churches and the Clergy need to be encouraged to understand the needs for keeping their bells ringing
- lii Ringing must be promoted in new areas of potential recruitment

- iv Funds generally are best raised locally for local schemes but national support systems of the Council and Ringing Foundation need urgently to be put on a sound financial basis

Through the co-operation of local societies and their constituent towers and endorsement of a national initiative it should be possible to achieve the following:-

- a) Roll out of a recommended training programme (ITTS)
- b) A significant increase in the number of teachers accredited through the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART)
- c) The establishment of significantly more Young Ringers groups
- d) A universal ringing brand identifiable to the public
- e) Awards for meritorious achievements
- f) Appropriate training centres in each geographical area according to local need.
- g) A Central Council capable of assisting with funding and itself having proper financial support

In seeking to achieve any of the above which are essential tools to securing ringing for the future there are these stakeholders who need to buy in to the proposals and give their full support:-

- 1 The church, bell-founders and hangers
- 2 Ringers and their societies
- 3 Outside bodies identified as sources of facilitators or recruits
- 4 Funding agencies including the Ringing Foundation

### **3 Way forward and progress to date**

The Wellesbourne Conference recognised the need to set up contact centres to receive and articulate the views of young ringers, develop future leaders and act as an organising body for youth activities. Two such contact points now established are in Hertfordshire (Marc McDonald) and Kent (Daniel Brady). These persons can be contacted by email, respectively [marcyouthforum@gmail.com](mailto:marcyouthforum@gmail.com) and [danielw.brady@gmail.com](mailto:danielw.brady@gmail.com).

The use of the Integrated Teacher Training Scheme has proved its value and there has now been formed an **Association of Ringing Teachers**. Although not mandatory, it is the intention that this will be the standard way in which those teaching ringing will qualify for their role.

The **Ringing Foundation** is seeking to fund and appoint an administrator to deal with co-ordination of the expanding ITTS work and to have the person in place by late 2012.

The RF jointly with the Ringing Centres Committee is intending to publish a “good practice” booklet later this year to assist societies in reviewing and developing their recruitment and training programmes.

The immediate aim of the Ringing Foundation is to achieve 200 new trained instructors and a throughput of 500 additional trained young ringers per annum by early 2015.

Modern society is much different to that of say 40 years ago and detailed research needs to be undertaken to establish where recruitment and training should be focussed in order to achieve the best long term outcome for the exercise.

As a separate exercise there is a need to develop a readily recognisable branding for bell-ringing which will be both a draw to the public and a badge of pride for ringers.

### **The Council as a Service to Ringing**

The Central Council, whether in its present form or as a developed body will, together with its partners, be in the forefront of providing **services** to ringers and their affiliated societies. The services which are envisaged, including items previously mentioned are as follows:

#### ***Recruitment and promotion***

*Use of marketing skills to create “focus” for recruitment*  
*Rebranding ringing*  
*National PR Campaigns*  
*Promotional material to enable effective local PR*  
*Dissemination of good practice*

#### ***Association of Ringing Teachers/ ITTS***

*Training in teaching techniques*  
*Accreditation and support*  
*Portal for teaching and learning support (Moodle)*

#### ***Ringing and Teaching Centres***

Advice and assistance to Guilds in setting up new centres and improving standards of teaching

#### ***Youth Forum***

*Representing young ringers internationally*  
*Co-ordinating activities for the under-30s*

#### ***Technology and Resources***

*Improved websites*  
*Match text books to modern needs*  
*Improve access – on line sales*

#### **4 The Role of affiliated Societies**

The provision of services through the Council can only be limited and the real difference will only be seen if immense effort is made at ground level by each Society, their respective tower membership and the enthusiasm of their Officers.

This will require resource input both financial and human. In terms of finance ringing is a “cheap” hobby and regarded by some as undervalued as a result. Payment to learn to ring would give status and a value and would fund the quality of teaching which users of other leisure courses expect.

Fees alone are not enough to secure the improvements which are recommended and all affiliated societies should be looking at ways to fund teaching locally whether in terms of people or equipment.

This may mean setting up recruitment and Training Funds, in the same way that Bell restoration Funds have been established in many Societies over the past decades.

The Future of Ringing is in our hands we must not shrink from grasping what might be a last opportunity to prevent slow decline. Each and every Society is asked to support the Council in its initiatives for the Future of Ringing.

All affiliated societies are requested to respond within six months as to the following:-

1. The existence of or proposals for specific youth groups, youth activities and the responsible officers
2. Review existing centres of teaching and develop proposals for expanding the recruitment and training of new ringers, particularly young people together with the training of new teachers through ITTS.
3. The extent of support which they and their respective members are prepared to give to these initiatives in terms of manpower and finance.
4. Advise what support and finance is required from the Council and the Ringing Foundation.

*Wellesbourne Review Group – 27<sup>th</sup> April 2012*

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