

# Large-scale Funding for Ringing – Further thoughts

This note goes beyond my previous (Issues) note, which was mainly trying to capture previous related discussions. I am trying to address the questions that I asked us all to think about in my previous message:

- What are the 'real problems' we are trying to solve?
- How do they relate to the offer of funding from the donors?
- How can they realistically be solved?
- What can CC do to bring about the desired results?

## The 'real problems'

Our immediate task is to produce a credible and useful response to the offer of some funding for training and recruitment. Our long term motive is (I assume) to help secure the future health of ringing. Between those two levels, we have to make a connection.

We can tackle that in two ways. We can either list 'good things to do', many of which will be free, and note wherever some extra money might help, then add up how much money it would all need. Alternatively, we can look explicitly at the reasons why money currently plays so little part in training ringers, to determine whether that constrains progress, and if so, seek ways to overcome the constraints. Then we work out what the cost of doing things differently.

Both approaches are useful. I think Roger's paper represents the first approach, and my earlier one represents the second. The first is almost certainly more 'doable', while the second launches more into the unknown. If our brief was simply to look at ways to improve ringing, I would probably opt for the first, because it seems lower risk, and is more likely to 'deliver something'. But our brief isn't just to look for improvements, it is also about the ability to use funding effectively.

## Relation to the donors offer

The reason the Working Group exists is because we have received a specific, money-related challenge. The essence of which is:

- That we haven't got our act together. We raise money for bells, but don't raise money for the more important matter of training and recruitment.
- That there is some money on the table from the donors if we can find a credible use for it.
- [That there are other sources of money sitting unused (eg B&W).]
- [That there is untapped public money available for 'people projects' that can meet the necessary criteria.]

The first two points represent what the (potential) donors actually said, but I think we should interpret their challenge in the wider context, which is why I added the two items in brackets.

## Realistic ways to solve the problems

We need to tackle the problem from both ends (the two approaches above). We should certainly pursue the sort of ideas that Roger lists, including the possibility of a Ringing Trust, but I feel we should also bite the bullet and seriously tackle the fact the currently there are so few monetary levers available to to influence the state of ringing, other than by the provision of hardware. This will take us into difficult water, including the need to challenge cultural expectations that everything in ringing should be 'free'. The donor is reported to have said that we would probably not rise to the challenge because it would take us out of our comfort zone. Let us not be constrained by comfort zones.

## CC actions

Roger points out that good results come from committed and motivated individuals. He could have said 'at the coal face'. The CC is a long way from the coal face, so we need to be clear what it is best for CC to do. I see three potential reasons for CC playing a key role:

- Leadership – If the Exercise needs to break out of current habits and mindsets, then CC should be taking the lead. That might not be the CC's popular image, in which case, doing so might also help to change the image.
- Scale and co-ordination – Anything involving large scale funding will almost certainly need central co-ordination (as the Millennium project showed). CC is the only credible central co-ordinator.
- Dissemination – Major improvement will only come about if changes are widely applied. CC is in a good position to help spread good ideas. This is perhaps the weakest role, but nevertheless important.

At the same time, we must recognise that most actual change will be achieved at the coal face, and CC can only help bring about improvements with the active support of many others (societies and individuals).

Roger has already listed quite a lot of bottom-up ideas, and we might add a few more. I don't have a list of solutions to the wider question of deploying funding in ringing, but I listed plenty of questions in my earlier note. My proposal is that we try to answer them, ie explore what has and hasn't been tried, seek ways to overcome the apparent barriers, and seek opportunities to develop pilot projects. At the same time, we should look at the big picture in terms of other sources of interim funding (eg B&W), potential streams of long term funding. There may be opportunities to merge some of the bottom up and top down ideas, eg the Ringing Trust might be the vehicle for major programme funding, as well as awards and one-off projects.

JAH 15 Aug 2006