



# national back exchange

## Guide to Forming a Local Group

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It is easy to set up a group. Once a group of people who share a common interest decide to set up a group they should elect a committee with at least the following three officers from the members.

- \* **The Chairperson** has overall control of the organisation. They keep the committee meetings in order, have the casting vote at committee meetings (if this is specified in the Constitution) and act as the main spokesperson for the group. It may be appropriate to appoint a Vice-Chair for the occasions on which the chairperson may be unable to attend.
- \* **The Secretary's** main role is to take the minutes at all meetings. Committee members and, if appropriate, all the members of the group should be given a copy of the minutes. The Secretary also deals with and keeps records of all correspondence to and from the Group, and keeps the list of members up to date. Circulation of programmes and agendas for forthcoming events is another key responsibility. Ideally information relating to inaugural/annual general meetings should be circulated at least 21 days in advance (or as otherwise specified in the Constitution).

The Secretary is the primary link between the National Back Exchange Executive and the Group and should also include in their responsibilities the production of the Group's activities for inclusion in the National Back Exchange Journal, (The Column). A demanding job!

- \* **The Treasurer** is responsible for collecting and controlling the Group's money. They must deal with any money the group receives or pays out and must make sure that the group has enough funds to keep going. The Treasurer also keeps the financial records (for example the cashbook and the petty cashbook).

**Additional information is enclosed in this pack but please seek advice from the Treasurer of the National Back Exchange Committee if you have any difficulties.**

The Group can run with a committee of three officers (depending on its size) but often other members will be chosen to be on the committee and to help to run the Group. You may wish to create a separate post of Membership Secretary if your group is of a significant size. You may wish to appoint independent auditors to check the final accounts the Treasurer presents to the Annual General Meetings.

## ***Election of Officers and Constitution***

Once you have decided to set up a Group you should call a meeting. In the first meeting you should elect the officers of the committee. Their first task will be to draw up a *Constitution* (see the Specimen Constitution document on the NBE website). The Group's aims should reflect the aims of National Back Exchange and should be clearly stated in rules so that there can be no doubt about the group's purpose.

The Constitution should also cover things such as:

- membership
- election of officers
- conducting meetings
- the officers powers, and
- a procedure for the dissolution of the group.

Most groups will hold regular meetings throughout the year, as well as their Annual General Meeting.

## ***Membership Meetings***

Hold membership meetings as often as you need to. A successful medium sized Group would usually hold a membership meeting every month. How often these meetings will be held is usually written into the Constitution.

The Constitution should indicate the number of members required to form a *quorum*. A quorum is the minimum number of members who must be at a meeting before any business dealt with at the meeting can become valid. Membership resolutions will not be valid without a quorum.

## ***General Meetings***

Only the members of the group who have the right to vote can attend these meetings. Whenever a particular item of business is left for all the members to decide on (for example a change to the Constitution), the only way that decision can be made is at a General Meeting. At General Meetings the elected members have no more status or voting power than the ordinary members. You should hold a General Meeting at least once a year (an Annual General Meeting) and thereafter as often as your Constitution allows.

## ***Organising and Running Meetings***

There are no fixed rules about how to organise meetings, but you should follow these suggested guidelines in order to organise and run them effectively.

## **Notices**

The Constitution should set specific periods of notice that you will give to anyone who is entitled to attend a meeting. The notice period may vary according to the type of meeting, but for membership meetings it is usually 14 days and for general meetings 21 days.

## The Agenda

The Committee and particularly the Secretary, sets the agenda for any meeting. They must include any points which will be dealt with at the meeting.

## The Minutes

One of the first things you must do at a meeting is to read the minutes of the last meeting. When you have done this you should propose that the members should accept the minutes as an accurate record of what took place. When the members have accepted the minutes, the Chairperson should sign and date the minutes. Following acceptance of the minutes you can deal with matters arising. This is a report of any action that has been taken following a decision recorded in the minutes of the last meeting, plus any discussion that is needed to explain the current position.

## Motions, Amendments and Resolutions

A *motion* is a formal proposition that something should be done, for example that the membership fees should be raised. An *amendment* is a formal proposal that the original motion should be changed in some way. A *resolution* is the final outcome of the debate. For example a majority is in favour of the rise in fees this is recorded in the minutes as a resolution of the meeting.

## Voting

Every motion will need to be put to the vote sooner or later. The Constitution should clearly state:

- the majority needed to carry a motion
- who can vote
- how members vote, and
- whether proxy votes are allowed (voting on behalf of someone else).

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majority of members at a meeting will usually be enough to carry a motion unless the Constitution states otherwise. The Chairperson will have the casting vote if there is a tie.