



Southern Men's Shed Network

Wednesday 15rd September 2021

www.smsn.org.uk

Hosted by Fareham Men's Shed

(Venue: The Great Barn, Mill Lane, Titchfield (PO15 5RB))

Present: (approx 40 from 16 sheds)

Apologies: Brian Cooke (Andover)

Graham Gowman (Nursling) chaired the meeting, Tony George (Hayling) took the meeting notes.

1. Welcome and Introduction

Welcome announcements and safety notices were given by Chris Nixon (Fareham).

The chairman (Graham Gowman) opened the meeting at 11:30 and welcomed everyone.

He thanked the Fareham Men's Shed (FMS) for hosting the meeting and for their generous hospitality.

2. Shed News / Updates

Graham Gowman asked the question:

Looking back, what were the three main problems in setting up your Shed?'

These were Premises, Funding, Insurance and whether (or not) to become a CIO.

By and large these are still the same, with premises being the most difficult to overcome.

Insurance is, unfortunately, a necessity but the situation regarding this is much improved with better and more flexible cover being offered to Men's Sheds these days.

Becoming a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) is a useful step as it helps cover the responsibilities of the Trustees. Becoming a Charity also offers other benefits that can be taken up.

Other problems obviously arise as Sheds progress, one other that crops up is how to cope with ladies asking to join. There is little guidance on this from UKMSA and no central rule. It would be up to the individual Sheds to make any decisions and would depend on how they operate their rules. It was agreed that a rule structure is important for Sheds.

Some concerns were also raised regarding the offering of suitable training and guidelines for operating machinery. It was generally viewed that some procedure should be in place to ensure members are safe to use various machines, but this exists in different forms at different sheds.

Graham then asked for feedback from the participants regarding the effect Covid had on their sheds.

Romsey.

Qualified for a grant for the Council (their shed is rateable). They kept involved using Zoom etc. Some members did however drop out.

Fareham.

Applied for a grant but didn't qualify as they had too much in the bank. Kept contact with members with a phone around etc.

Church Crookham & Fleet.

Had to close. Set up a PPE production process with 3D printing and volunteers to cut and finish visors for the use of care homes and others. Produced over 2000 units. They put out a request for donations to cover their costs, around £5,000 and were astonished to receive £11,500. The excess was returned to the community through various projects.

Graham then gave a short history of SMSN and looked at its growth and the fact that it could start to divide as other networks come into being and due to its ever increasing radius of shed interest.

Tez Cook – HCC, asked what support had been forthcoming from Councils.

The general feeling that little was being done within Hampshire, but some support had been received from Portsmouth, Southampton & West Sussex.

Tez responded that Hampshire had set up a Men's Activity Network under the umbrella of the Interreg 2Seas Step By Step project (www.stepbystep.org.uk). This was inspired by the Men's Shed movement to improve health.

The feeling was that the communication links for this were somewhat weak as little was known about it.

3. What is the future for our Networks? (Gerry Johnson)

Gerry Johnson, Hayling Island Men's Shed, took the floor to preside over this section.

Gerry had recently become the UKMSA shed ambassador for East Hampshire & West Sussex borders.

The area covered 18 sheds with 2 new ones in hand in Liss and Petersfield.

There is a planned meeting in West Sussex for next week. This is being driven by West Sussex CC who have money set aside to develop sheds in the County.

They can offer grants of £2,500 for year one with another £2,500 in year 2.

Steve Redrup reminded us of the history of the SMSN. Originally driven from the Portsea/Copnor/Havant sheds to cover an area within a 25-mile radius.

This was now nearer to a 50-mile radius as more and more sheds have become interested.

The question was: **is now the time for more smaller closer networks?**

The discussion was opened to the floor.

Chris Nixon supported a restriction to County borders

Ian (MAYFACS) - Mayfield, East Sussex asked if the SMSN would become an umbrella regional organisation for several smaller networks?

Alan Walker – Church Crookham asked why we need the networks. Felt that the UKMSA could be pressed to provide more support. Feedback to them could be via the ambassador program to set up an ideas exchange. Question from the floor. Was this a top-down or bottom-up organisation?

Gerry replied that it must be bottom up to get the right support.

Roy Weslley - Woking & District, Graham Gowman had kept in contact through chair.

All work had been carried out by members in the shed and UKMSA had been little help. Covid stopped progress after the site and permissions had been obtained. This is on a care home site so shed is restricted to their rules.

Still shut because of this. Weybridge shed had been a great help.

Sees a possibility of a Surrey based network being set up.

Steve Redrup said a top-down approach would not work. UKMSA should be looked upon as a flagship repository. Networks need a ground up self-help structure. Best to use the UKMSA as a centre of resource, particularly for start-up sheds.

Andy Pottinger – Portsea, said in the early days the network was created by local sheds interacting. This is the basis of the current network, sharing advice shed to shed.

Peter Edge – Wilton, asked if the SMSN was promoting itself and its ideas to other areas. SR replied yes. Peter continued that they had a self-built shed, costs £15,000 and were VAT registered.

Tez suggested that UKMSA could link with other networks to update the UKMSA networks tab on their website. Gerry Johnson replied changes to this were due.

Chris asked is UKMSA fit for purpose? Feels that to be effective it needs to be bigger than the current small organisation, largely volunteers or part timers.

Cliff – Fareham, stated that the SMSN sets a good example of help and communication. UKMSA should be the umbrella for all UK networks. He likes the idea of County borders for networks. Had asked questions regarding banks/gift aid and insurance.

What was put forward for the future of the SMSN and its meetings?

Chris from Fareham felt catering was this biggest problem as pre-booking was not necessary, there was no fixed membership and a finger in the air approach had to be taken regarding attendance.

38 seems to be the average with highs of around 60. There does appear to be a core of sheds that attend most meetings but the open forum means anyone can attend.

Other points to consider regarding hosting was that some sheds would require venue hire.

Should the SMSN charge a fee to attend.

Angus – Portsea supported the idea that hosts just provide snacks (tea/coffee/biscuits) and if attendees need more, they bring it themselves. Also, meetings could be tighter and shorter.

Conclusion

SMSN meetings to continue.

Hosting should be kept within Hampshire (if possible) to reduce travel and maximise attendance.

Reduced refreshments (Tea / Coffee and Biscuits).

Same overall template and agenda.

Possible reduction in length of meetings.

Earlier start time.

Suggested: 1st session 11:00 – 12:00, 45 Minute break/open discussion, 2nd session 12:45 – 14:00.

4. What is the right technology for the Network? Chris Nixon

Chris Nixon asked the question do we need the website forum?
Was this the best use of existing technology or is there a better way?
He pointed out the relative lack of use as the forum as a platform.
Offered WhatsApp and Facebook as possible alternative options.
A quick count showed that few members had used these either.

Gerry Johnson responded by saying that he felt the forum was more for the use of the officers of the interested sheds rather than general members. If that isn't the Chairman, then perhaps a dedicated shed member should be asked to keep abreast of discussions and contributions on our forum.

Steve Redrup stated that the online newsletter is only generated when a new query, post or information is submitted to the forum. The post and link was then included in the newsletter and sent to subscribers. Anyone can subscribe through the website ([smsn.org.uk](https://www.smsn.org.uk))

It was felt that the existing website and forum were still the right means of keeping in touch, but maybe it was time to remind sheds of the existence of the website and forum.

Steve Redrup to be scheduled to present a reiteration of their existence and use at a future meeting to be used as a guide for future users.

5. AOB

Tez Cook reminded everyone to check out the HCC Men's Activity Network (<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/publichealth/mensactivitynetwork>).

6. Next SMSN Meeting

Date of the Next Meeting is yet to be confirmed.
It is hoped that the meeting will be in either December or early January.

Allan Walker (Church Crookham & Fleet) said he would look at his shed, possibly, hosting the next meeting.

7. (2:45pm) Meeting closed.

The meeting closed with Steve Redrup giving "Thanks" to Fareham Men's Shed for hosting, with a special Thank You to the people who provided the catering and thanked everyone for attending and for such a good turnout for our first (post Covid) meeting.

NOTE: Viewing the contents of the SMSN (www.smsn.org.uk) Forum does not require registration but to post new content, you must register on the forum to gain update rights. Also, any new posts will automatically be included in the weekly newsletter which is sent to all emailing list subscribers (currently over 120). Anyone can subscribe (Newsletter, Meeting Notices & General Notices) through our website (www.smsn.org.uk)