

Minutes from the EACR Training and Recruitment Sub-Committee Meeting

Venue: Via Zoom
Date: 7th June 2026
Time: 20:00 hours

Present: Beth Johnson, Carol Adams, Anne Bray, Sarah Chin-a-Loy, Sylvia Crick, Sarah Holland, Nick Holland, Ian Kerwin, Sandra Murphy (aka Smurf), Anne Sloan and David Sparling

Apologies: Andrew Brewster, Christina Brewster, and Ian Culham

Copied to: Steve Ashley, Andrew Beech, and Nigel Taylor (EACR Master) and Julia Taylor (EACR Secretary)

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2026 were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

Beth asked if there were any matters that need to be raised from the minutes of the last meeting and added that the new action list is useful, also that matters arising are covered within the agenda items for this meeting.

2. Strategic Discussion

Sarah Holland had taken recent voting on priority initiatives to create chart at Appendix A, and highlighted that some items are already in progress. It was acknowledged that the group needs to determine what are 5 or 10-year targets and that more people are needed to achieve our aims. Despite ranking, all current activities should continue.

a) Training Courses

There is concern about ringers who repeatedly attend the same course and should our courses include additional sessions and not be 'stand-alone'. Some candidates do not have the opportunity to practise sufficiently at their home towers after attending a course. We have time to address this before the November training course.

b) Mancroft-style Centre/Hubs

The group discussed a Mancroft-style training centre for Essex and training hubs within the county, which may include simulators and/or dumb bells, for example, Coggeshall has a dumb bell, which can be linked to a computer, providing good teaching opportunities. Also, dumb bells can be set up anywhere with the right amount of space, not necessarily within a ringing room.

Consider developing a check list for what hubs should offer.

It was acknowledged that wider support from the right people is needed to enable this concept to move forward and that our Association does have the number of ringers needed with the right skills to achieve this aim.

Paid positions and the resistance previously by the Association to this concept were discussed. It was recognised that EACR members are generally aware that bequest funds have not been spent by the Association and therefore priorities may have changed since this subject was initially muted by the Association during the Bequests Survey of 2022. There was general agreement that the Subcommittee thinks there is a growing belief among members that we need a lasting memorial to those who made the bequests.

It was suggested that hubs should be near good public transport, primarily a train line, so that members, particularly from SW District, are given the best opportunities to access training. The training calendar could have more effect if marketed well, enabling ringers to practice outside their district.

Sarah H highlighted the top 3 items from the Strategy Document that had achieved 7 votes (colours relate to Key Objectives):

a) **Encourage the use of simulators or sound control in teaching (fund tech/ establish a simulator user group**

This activity is already supported by the Subcommittee but we need to be proactive and look at towers that could be used for the Essex Ringing Course while remembering that a tower needs to be passionate about the concept to make it work. Sarah H and Anne B agreed to begin the conversation re towers to approach.

b) **Run regular bell handling sessions for teachers to gain supportive ‘on the job’ experience**

c) **Promote a ringing and training environment that is attractive, welcoming and, where possible, accessible**

d) **Promote the Essex Young Ringers Group to under 25 year-old ringers**

Sarah CaL advised that website updates will be made, she is liaising with the Youth Coordinator. Investigate using Membermojo to contact young ringers.

e) **Deliver courses on running practices and being a ringing leader/ Provide advice for Tower Captains on ways to develop ringers through the different ringing zones**

Consider how to better support and train tower captains and practice leaders, including possible external leadership training. Potential to create a community of tower captains, appointing Tower Captain Champions, creating a website/page for tower captains.

f) **Oversee an ‘exit’ survey for ringers who do not renew their membership**

BJ has enquired of Colin Chapman regarding GDPR implications for contacting lapsed members.

g) **Oversee a ‘ringing health’ survey to understand current challenges and strengths.**

Proposed survey to be conducted every 2.5 years; find willing researcher.

h) **Provide advice and grants for bell maintenance and improvements in the ringing experience**

Beth stressed the importance of raising awareness about grant applications through the Subcommittee. For example, the rope guides, recently installed at Hutton, have been transformational for those who practise and teach at the tower. How can the Subcommittee better encourage towers to make grant applications.

How might we incorporate the views of under 30-year-old ringers into the activity of the Recruitment and Training Subcommittee? Form a small advisory group? Continue to work with universities in Essex (and consider Anglia Ruskin) for recruitment and retention.

Consider approaching the Management Committee in October to promote our strategies and encourage members to take on extra tasks.

Beth thanked Sarah Holland for her useful and helpful work developing the strategy document.

3. **Recruitment and Retention Event – September 2026**

Beth has agreed with Trustees for £2,000 to be available for the event. This will pay for the three mobile rings at five towers. Beth will follow up other towers to ascertain what is being planned.

The Heritage Open Days (HOD) website is now live where information can be uploaded about tower events. Beth is the Coordinator; Sarah H suggested sending brief copy to towers for their event description.

There are funds within the £2k to produce promotion material suitable for before and on the day. Sarah H will be selling tickets for Coggeshall through Eventbrite and is happy to help others towers set up Eventbrite if they wish to 'sell' tickets.

After the event we will analyse the results to understand the impact of the event and what worked.

4. **Around the Districts**

a) **South Eastern**

Sandra Murphy spoke about the success of a plain bob doubles course that is run monthly. She added that ringers are asked to confirm if they are attending, however, this doesn't always work out and high numbers can be problematic. Smurf said possibly two practices monthly could be considered.

b) **Northern**

Sarah and Nick Holland shared that a one-day plain bob doubles course at Coggeshall was a success and they are trying to manage numbers at Bardfield for foundation skills; luckily 4 teachers have been available. There was a disappointing trip to Saffron Walden when only 4 members attended. Hard work has gone into encouraging bands to enter the competition, giving guidance before going into practice their pieces.

c) **North Western**

Anne Sloan spoke of running a course for those moving up to ringing on 8 bells including Stedman triples. A calling workshop is starting at Henham on 19th June and anyone from outside the district is welcome to attend. Beth asked to be informed of any gaps, and Anne will send Beth an e-mail to be sent out.

d) **North Eastern**

David Sparling spoke about a plain bob doubles training day where three groups took part. He added that there is never enough training available for bob doubles.

e) **South Western**

Sylvia Crick said that Chigwell Row has a new band; four members have joined including the vicar who is encouraging the congregation. The band is loving their new hobby and have formed a society. They will perhaps be ready for weddings later this year. The band is a result of an open day. The 6-bell competition will take place there next Saturday, 13th June. Loughton also has 4-5 new ringers, which is great news as at one point the ringing may have stopped completely.

Andrew Bond has taken Grays in the Southern district under his wing, a tower that had fallen out of active ringing.

f) **Southern**

Carol Adams spoke about a General Practice that was held at Basildon using the simulator. A further two practices for the district are scheduled this year. This Subcommittee gave support towards having the simulator restored at Basildon which is also being used for training the band including a new ringer.

5. **Budgets and Grant Applications**

Sarah and Nick have received one quote for rope guides and require another to enable a grant application, which is not proving easy. The Subcommittee discussed potentially having a single quote as this is from a reputable provider; also there is an awareness of cost following recent installations at Great Tey and Hutton. Look at Grants Application web page to make it as helpful as possible, especially providing a list of what information you will need before you start your application.

6. **Training Courses**

a) Essex Ringing Course 2026: Feedback is generally very good.

- b) ART Courses: Beth has advertised M1 and M2 courses and has received four responses for the M1 and two for the M2. She will advertise again to see if more candidates come forward. Beth asked for everyone to promote the course to anyone they feel may benefit from the course.
- c) November Training Day (28th): Beth has started thinking about the courses to be run to include Steeple keeping and a calling course specifically for women to address gender disparities in conducting, run by a woman. Smurf flagged that the Ladies Guild is also considering such a course and Beth and Smurf will liaise. David stated that the Ringing World is promoting conducting and ringing 'round the back' for women; currently conducting is hugely biased towards men.

7. Formation of a Simulator User Group

Smurf has chased Simon Mann who has been working very hard trying to provide sound control at Goldhanger. Smurf has also been to Little Baddow where a young ringer called Michael has built his own sensors at £2 each. Simon is hoping for a young apprentice and Michael might be a good candidate.

8. Essex Young Ringers

Christina has reported very busy practices in January (19 ringers), March outing (15 ringers), April Seecon competition – two bands entered, April practice (17 ringers) and May (19 ringers). There has been much preparation for the Ringing World competition in Nottingham on 4th July where 44 bands will be entering. Essex Eagles are entering bands in 3 of the competitions.

The Subcommittee once again thanked Christina (and Andrew) for their dedication to the group, especially in taking 18 young ringers to the competition. There is an outing in September and monthly practices continue.

9. First Pealers Club

There have been no 'First Pealers' over the last few months. See Action List.

10. Any Other Business

- a) Smurf is excited that Mike Warboys is considering using a space at Sandon for a training hub with a simulator and dumb bells. The project will need PCC approval and will involve redecoration and installation of seating. Advantages include a car park, kitchen, located near to the A12, park and ride within a short distance and a good pub opposite the Church. This will be a good case study for other training centres which could be set up.
- b) Sarah H spoke about a video that went viral of the reckless action of the vicar at St Edward's Church, Romford within the ringing room and amongst the bells in the 'up' position. Andrew Bond, Tower Captain at St Edward's, was very unhappy about the incident, and has explained protocol to the new vicar, but before the video was taken down it went viral.
- c) Dunmow has an issue because the PCC want to move the ringing room upstairs to enable installation of a creche and toilet. This has a potentially significant impact on the band who may not have the capacity to access the proposed location for health reasons. Advice to be given to the band to contact Nigel Taylor who may have an influence on the faculty through the DAC. Sarah H will take forward if the band are not happy to do this themselves.
- d) The committee discussed a potential involvement in the Essex International Jamboree 2028, with Beth proposing to support the event as a PR exercise despite the organizational effort required. The group agreed to consider participating, with Beth offering to present the proposal at the AMC in October,

The Recruitment and Training Sub-Committee to be held in July is 'in person' and Beth will put out a poll to see for Sundays late July/early August. Suggestions for venue welcome.

The meeting closed at 9.55pm

EACR Recruitment and Training Sub-Committee Action List

Meeting Date	Event/ Subject	Item	Responsible	Target Date	Completion
26/04/26	First Pealers Club	Re-advertise and promote club	Beth and Ian C	Mid July	
26/04/26	Simulators	Chase Simon about content for the Simulator user group website.	Smurf	Mid July	
26/04/26	Grand Recruitment event	Provide guidance to towers about how to list their events on the Heritage Open Day website, advertise in local magazines and set up Eventbrite events for 'selling' tickets.	Beth/SH /Smurf	12/06/26	
26/04/26	Grand Recruitment event	Remind towers about safeguarding, risk assessment requirements and PCC approval for events.	Beth	12/06/26	
07/06/26	Meeting	Identify location for 19 July meeting (north of Chelmsford preferred).	Group	21/06/26	
07/04/26	Grand Recruitment event	Send list of participating towers to District Training Officers; they to encourage more towers to join in	Beth	14/06/26	
07/06/26	Training Calendar	Look at advertising the training calendar more widely	Beth	21/06/26	
26/04/26	Grand Recruitment event	Participating towers to provide feedback regarding their plans	Beth	30/06/26	
26/04/26	Grand Recruitment event	Provide customisable promotional materials (leaflets/banners) to participating towers.	Beth	13/07/26	
26/04/26	Promotion of training hubs	Consider developing a check list for what hubs should offer.	TBA	13/07/26	
07/06/26	Installation of Simulators	Identify towers to approach	Anne B/Smurf	Mid July	
07/06/026	Teach the teachers	Find individual to run new sessions	Beth	Mid July	
07/06/26	Advertise Grants	Identify opportunities to encourage grant applications	Beth/all	Mid July	
07/06/26	Young Ringers	Investigate Membermojo contact	Beth/CB	Mid July	
07/06/26	Exit Questionnaire	Report back on enquiry to Colin Chapman	Beth	Mid July	
07/06/26	Ringling Health Survey	Identify researcher	Beth	Mid July	
07/06/26	ART courses	Advertise again for M1/M2 students	Beth	12/06/26	
07/06/26	November Training Day	Proposed list of courses to next meeting; any suggestions welcome	Beth	Mid July	
07/06/26	Grand Recruitment event	Arrange for delivery of promotional materials to towers.	Beth	02/09/26	
07/06/26	Essex International Jamboree 2028	Beth to take proposal to support to next AMC	Beth	03/10/26	

PART 2: Highest Priority Workstreams

Eleven members of the R&T subcommittee provided their 'top 10' workstreams. The workstreams with the most votes (3 or above) are shown below in order of popularity:

Workstream	Total Votes
(£) Provide advice and grants for bell maintenance and improvements in the ringing experience *	7
(£) Encourage the use of simulators or sound control in teaching (fund tech/ establish a simulator user group*)	7
Run regular bell handling sessions for teachers to gain supportive 'on the job' experience	7
(£) Promote a ringing and training environment that is attractive, welcoming and, where possible, accessible	6
(£) Establish then oversee a public ringing visitor centre which will, through excellent facilities and paid staff, be both an advert for bellringing and a centre of skilled training for Essex ringers *	5
(£) Hold an annual cross-county awareness raising event *	5
Promote the Essex Young Ringers Group to under 25yrs ringers	5
(£) Deliver courses on running practices and being a ringing leader	5
Oversee an 'exit' survey for ringers who do not renew their membership	5
Oversee a 'ringing health' survey (frequency to be agreed) to understand current challenges and strengths (and disseminate the challenges identified)	5
Provide advice for Tower Captains on ways to develop ringers through the different ringing zones	4
(£) Identify towers in populous areas with good access and assist them to run awareness raising events *	3
Incorporate the views of under 30yrs ringers into R&T activity (and wider Association activity *)	3
(£) Provide guidance on engagement with schools and the setting up of school bellringing clubs and societies	3
(£) Support 'active' towers to improve their ringing facilities if required *	3
(£) Subsidise Essex Young ringers (under 30yrs) to attend ART training courses and other development opportunities	3
Oversee a programme which identifies and encourages future teachers and leaders	3
Provide a forum for district education reps to learn what is working elsewhere (collate and share practice)	3
Create a buddy mentoring system for aspiring ringers who are keen to advance through the Red Zone	3

Members may wish to consider the following additional workstreams which were not voted upon but were proposed either at the last R&T subcommittee meeting or in follow-up communication with members:

- NEW - (£) Establish 6 sets of 'District Based' dumb bells (currently 2 votes)
- NEW - (£) Establish ringing hubs/teaching centres across the Association (currently 2 votes)
- NEW - Coordinate regular progression practices covering different levels of ringing ability (currently 1 vote)

Members may also wish to consider the following workstreams which did not make the table above, but which are currently part of the R&S subcommittee remit:

- (£) Support grant applications from towers seeking to advertise or recruit ringers
- Provide a central point of contact for any recruitment enquires
- (£) Work with the universities in Essex (**University of Essex & Anglia Ruskin Uni**) to establish bellringing societies
- Organise and promote ART training courses in Essex (NEW - Ensure a level of rope confidence for attendees)
- Support the delivery of the annual 3-day Essex Ringing Course (training opportunities for all ringing levels)
- Deliver 1-day training courses
- Promote peal ringing and run the 'First Pealer's Club'