

ALL TOGETHER NOW

Mention the words 'meeting' and 'committee' in the same sentence, and most people will lose interest immediately. However, according to **Gordon Weston** and **Andy Slaney** there is a way to make these events fun, interesting, and worth everyone's while

THINKING OF THE THEORY

Gordon Weston (Explorer Scout National Team) describes the theory behind Explorer Scout Committees

You might think that meetings and committees do not sound like promising subjects for an article on Explorer Scouting – and you could be right! It all depends on the way you approach meetings and committees. The trick is to make the meetings interesting and worthwhile. That way, people will want to be part of them.

This article is not about the usual Unit meetings that you hold on a regular basis. It is about the other meetings that you need to hold to ensure that Explorer Scouting runs smoothly in your particular patch.

"Which meetings?" I hear you cry. "Surely Explorer Scouting is run by the Leaders?"

This is true, but I hope that Explorer Scouts won't want the Leaders to make all the decisions for them. There should be input from the Explorer Scouts themselves concerning the Unit's programme, activities and social events.



The District Explorer Scout Committee decides on and helps to organise the programme for the District. They need to meet regularly to check the activities are meeting the needs of members

Each District needs to hold one mandatory meeting – the District Explorer Scout Meeting.

District Explorer Scout Meeting

This meeting should be held at least once a year. All the Explorer Scouts, Explorer Scout Leaders, District Explorer Scout Administrators and District Explorer Scout Commissioners should be invited along. It makes sense to try to incorporate this particular meeting with a social activity, perhaps during a weekend camp, which gives everyone the opportunity to get together. This also

provides a less formal atmosphere, which will be less threatening than running a conventional meeting.

The purpose of the meeting

The District Explorer Scout Meeting is the opportunity for Explorer Scouts to have their say on Explorer Scouting within the District and to help contribute towards planning an active programme for the coming year.

This is the meeting where the District Explorer Scout Committee should be elected. This committee decides on, and helps to organise, the programme for

the District. Members of the committee should be encouraged to run the District Explorer Scout Meeting with the support of their Leaders.

Don't forget that there may be specialist Units within your District who may have particular issues to address. One such Unit might be the Young Leaders' Unit.

The meeting should be relatively informal and everyone should have the opportunity to put their point of view across. A burning question in Scouting circles is always "Do we have to wear uniform?" The answer is that it really is up to you. You decide as a District.

What can be discussed?

This is up to the members of the Section. As a guide, you may wish to include some, all or none of the following:

- Election of the District Explorer Scout Committee.
- Review of last year's programme.
- Finances and how activities will be paid for.
- Issues to be raised by any specific Unit.
- Programme ideas.
- Successes and highlights of the Section over the past year.
- Details of any Explorer Belts that have taken place.
- Communication matters.

Leaders

This meeting is not primarily for the Leaders. They can have as much involvement as you like, but don't let them hijack the proceedings. Their opinions should be heard and then acted on, if appropriate.

District Explorer Scout Committee

The structure of this committee is decided by the District Explorer Scout Meeting. It should consist of Explorer Scouts, the District Explorer Scout Commissioner and District Explorer Scout Administrator. Other Leaders can be involved, but this is a committee primarily for Explorer Scouts. Members may feel that it is appropriate to elect a chairman and secretary. If this is the case, ensure that appropriate training is available so that they are able to undertake the role successfully.

The committee should:

- Decide on the programme for the



District. This should support the programmes for individual Units. Guidance on this can be found in *Unit essentials*.

- Review the programme regularly to ensure that it is meeting the needs of members, and adjust it if necessary. Once decided, the District programme should be explained and promoted to all Explorer Scouts in the District. They need to be made aware of the activities and social events on offer, the ways in which they can participate, and who they need to contact if they want to join in.

What about my Unit?

If there is more than one Unit within the District, a programme will also need to be agreed for each Unit.

It makes sense that a Programme Planning Group, formed from Explorer Scouts in the Unit, agrees the programme for the Unit. The Leaders should assist the group as required.

This should be an informal group that meets as often as necessary – there is no real need for a chairman or secretary, although someone will need to make notes and someone needs to ensure that whatever needs to be discussed is discussed. The Explorer Scouts could do this themselves, or ask one of the Leaders to do it.

Summary

There are very few formal committees for Explorer Scouts. Keep them to a minimum, and they should make the whole Explorer Scouting experience more fun.



Making the District meeting part of an activity weekend makes it more appealing

Flexibility and adaptability are our aims. Form small groups for specific purposes or projects. This way everyone can be involved and hopefully everyone then feels that they are taking an active role in the decision-making and running of the Section.

If you have any queries, speak to your Explorer Scout Leader or District Explorer Scout Commissioner. They should be able to give you the appropriate help, support and guidance.

APPLYING THE THEORY

Andy Slaney looks at how you can put the theory into practice

Thanks to Gordon for making what is a dry topic much more interesting. Some of you may be thinking that it sounds OK, but how do you put those clever words into practice? Let me try and help.

For starters, let's take Gordon's advice. Rather than having a stuffy two-hour meeting in an evening, let's



Divide the meeting into 'bite-sized' parts and fill the breaks with plenty of exciting activities

incorporate it into a weekend activity camp. Arrange to meet at about seven o'clock on Friday evening. That way, everyone will be ready to start part one of the weekend meeting by nine o'clock.

Part one

Start with a few light-hearted games. If there are lots of Units in the District, then some ice-breaker games could be useful to introduce people who may not have met before.

After this, the serious stuff begins, but the trick is to not make it seem too formal. Get some flip chart sheets of paper and put them around the room. There should be a different heading on each sheet, such as Interesting, Challenging, Fun, Boring, and so on.

Give each Explorer Scout a pen and ask them write on the paper any activities they have done in the past year that fit into those particular categories. Depending on the category, they could also include things they haven't done yet but would be interested in doing.

That's part one over. Now it's time to play a wide game, hold a camp-fire or do something equally sociable.

You may ask what the point of that exercise was. Refer back to Gordon's suggestions about what you may cover at the meeting. This exercise has given you a list of ideas and a review of last year's programme showing the highlights (and lowlights) of the past year. There are several advantages of completing these tasks in this way. You haven't put anyone on the spot or made them talk in front of a crowd, and you have had input from all the Explorer Scouts present.

Part two

Sometime on Saturday you then hold part two of the meeting. This will have to be a bit more formal and will involve the election of the District Explorer Scout Committee and discussion of any important issues – finance issues, feedback on Awards, completed, communication issues, and so on.

It's your District so include as many topics as you think appropriate. Remember to use the sheets produced during part one for input into part two. If appropriate, you could also ask for committee nominations, concerns about communications and any other issues using the same technique you used in part one. These will probably need people to write more than a single word, so its advisable to put these sheets out after breakfast and not hold part two until at least early afternoon, thus giving everyone ample time to fill them in.

The rest of the day is then yours to go skiing, hiking, caving or whatever.

If part two is run well it should last less than an hour. An ideal time to hold this section of the meeting would be following the evening meal. If you have arranged for a guest speaker to pop in after dinner and talk to you about their Everest expedition or round the world yacht race, it may be preferable to hold

Contact Details

You can write to Andy care of the *Scouting Magazine* office or email him at scouting.magazine@scout.org.uk

part two after lunch. That way, people won't be sitting still for long periods of time. The most important thing about part two is to keep it interesting.

Part three

This is the forward planning stage to be held sometime on Sunday. The District Explorer Scout Committee should start to plan the next year's programme. It is also the ideal time to put ideas together for the next expedition, to start to arrange your camp, or maybe schedule in the next phase of one of your Award Scheme projects. Split the Explorers into small groups to plan different aspects of the next year's programme.

OVER TO YOU!

Remember, no Explorer Scout will want to attend a meeting, but most will want to be part of the process that plans the events and activities that they will be doing in the months ahead.

One final note; astute ex-Venture Scout Leaders may think they have heard of this type of weekend before, and they would be right. It is very similar to the Getting Organised weekends that always proved popular when I ran them in my County. Do not be afraid to dig out old resources and think up new ways of using them. You do not have to reinvent the wheel every time. Sometimes all it needs is a new coat of paint.

Weekend agenda

Friday
19:00 Arrive and set up camp
21:00 Part one: what did we do last year?
22:00 Video

Saturday
08:30 Breakfast
10:00 Dry slope skiing
12:30 Lunch
13:30 Part two: the important bits
14:30 Go-karting experience
18:30 Evening meal
20:00 Talk
22:00 Wide game

Sunday
08:30 Breakfast
09:30 Scouts' Own
10:30 Ten pin bowling
12:30 Lunch
13:30 Part three: where do we go from here?
15:00 End of camp

TIME	ACTIVITY	ZONE	METHOD	INSTRUCTIONS
One hour	Renew it	Environment	Visits	Contact your local Community Renewables Initiative Support Team (contact details in the front of Yellow Pages and through your local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre). Invite them to give an interactive presentation on renewable energy and why we should be using it, or ask them to support you in looking at how you can convert your meeting place to use renewable energy.
A weekend or two, or a series of evenings	Wildlife Zone	Environment, Outdoors	Outdoor activities, Projects	Turn an area of wilderness at a local Scout meeting place into a wildlife garden. The following websites can provide information and ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.bornfree.org.uk/oaktree/index.html • www.bbhc.co.uk/nature/plants/charlie/howto_city.shtml • www.software-technics.co.uk/bhps/leaflets/WildlifeGarden.html A wildlife area not only gives wildlife a chance to be a part of your environment, but can also be a relaxing place to sit, and can be used for further conservation work for the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts who use the meeting place.
One hour	Question the Council	Environment	Visits	Invite your local Council Executive Director for the Environment to come and talk about what they are doing to help the environment in your local area.
One afternoon or evening	Litter bugs	Environment	Outdoor activities, Projects, Technology	Carry out an audit of litter in your local area, on streets, around public parks, beaches, railway and bus stations. What type of litter is it? Broken glass, cigarette ends, cans, or worse? Use the computer to generate a graph showing how much litter there is in different areas, and what type of litter it is. This could be used as a springboard for further projects.
Long term	Project	Environment	Various	Contact an environmental or conservation organisation. There are many throughout the UK – not only national ones (such as the RSPB, National Trust, National Parks, ENCAMS and so on), but also local ones, such as county wildlife trusts or city farms. They are usually only too happy to suggest and support a relevant and challenging project that could be undertaken over a period of time.
Six-month project	Group Environment Badge	Environment	Project	Get together with a Scout Group or Scout Network (or both) in your area and complete the Group Environment Badge.
Long term	Young Leaders	Environment	Working with other Sections	Young Leaders could use their experiences with these projects to help Cub Scouts and Scouts to work for their Global Conservation Activity Badges.