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RDA UK Governance Review

Proposed Changes to the RDA UK Articles of Association

Introduction

Last year we launched a Governance Review, examining the way we work across our federation of RDA Groups and the way the national charity, RDA UK, is run. Many of you attended roadshow events to discuss proposed changes or commented online in response to the consultation held last Autumn.

As part of this review, we have been developing changes to the RDA UK's Memorandum and Articles of Association. These changes were well supported during the Governance Review consultation last year, and we are now able to share with you the details of the proposed changes. RDA Member Groups will be asked to approve these changes at our Annual General Meeting in November.

In advance of the AGM, we are seeking your views on the details of the changes we propose, helping us to make sure the changes work for you. This document summarises the proposed changes and gives you information on how your views on these changes will be heard before we finalise the proposal.

What you told us in consultation?

We received strong support through the consultation for our proposal to amend RDA UK's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Feedback focused mainly on the importance of ensuring that our purpose, expressed in our 'Objects', reflects the broader range of equine assisted services now delivered by many RDA Groups. Whilst riding and carriage driving remain our core activities, the updated wording would also acknowledge the growing variety of other services that RDA Groups offer to support disabled people.

This point was highlighted during the consultation and is frequently raised in enquiries to RDA UK and our legal helpline. Importantly, these changes would not require all Groups to offer every type of activity. Instead, they recognise and affirm that that equine assisted services, alongside riding or carriage driving are all highly valued RDA activities, and each group would choose to deliver whichever services best supports their needs within this broader definition of the RDA Objects.

There was also widespread support to bring the Articles of Association document up-to-date with respect to legal terminology and day-to-day best practices, for example enabling the Board decisions to be made electronically via video call if needed (currently decisions are only valid if made in-person). There was also wholehearted support to use plain English wherever possible to make the document easier to understand.

What is changing and why?

There are **three main areas of change** proposed to the Articles of Association:

1) Objects of the charity:

We are proposing that the Objects should reflect the full range of activities provided by RDA Groups.

The current Objects are:

‘...to provide disabled people with the opportunity to ride and/or carriage drive to benefit their health and well-being.’

The proposed new Objects would be:

‘... to benefit the health and wellbeing of disabled people through the opportunity to ride and/or carriage drive, and to be involved with other related equine activities including equine assisted services.’

2) Governance of RDA UK:

We are proposing some changes to make it more straight-forwards for the RDA UK Board to operate and to ensure the Board composition always includes a balance of grass-roots volunteers and wider skillsets as needed. These changes sit alongside other recommendations already implemented following the

Governance Review, such as the creation of new Advisory Boards [link], and the empowerment of the Regional Chairs Committee (advising the Board on operational matters impacting Member Groups).

Examples of these changes include:

- a) Adding provisions to allow electronic voting by Trustees;
- b) Removing the 10-person limit on the number of Trustees so this can be flexible according to RDA needs; and
- c) Adding a criterion to have a balance of grassroots RDA experience in the Trustees, alongside the wider skillset required.

3) The latest position in law:

Some changes have been made to clarify procedures where needed, and to reflect changes in the law since the last update was made (back in 2004).

Examples of these changes include:

- a) removing reference to extraordinary general meetings and annual general meetings as it is no longer necessary to distinguish between the two, they are simply referred to as general meetings; and
- b) adding provisions on how Trustee conflicts of interest should be handled.

What happens next and how do I comment?

Now we have developed the detail of these changes, including a draft new Articles of Association for RDA UK, we would like to hear your feedback.

Please email your thoughts to governance@rda.org.uk by Friday 18th July.

Based on your feedback, we will then produce a final version of the new proposed Articles and circulate these before the AGM. Adoption of these new Articles will then be put forward at the AGM in November for Member Groups to vote on. New Articles will only be adopted with the support of the majority of Member Groups.

We will also be holding two online 'drop-in' sessions with our legal partners VWV to discuss these proposed changes, and to answer your questions. Anyone is welcome to join these meetings which will be held on the following dates:

Monday 30th June 18.00 – 19.00.

Join using this Zoom link: [Consultation event](#)

Wednesday 16th July 18.00 – 19.00.

Join using this Zoom link: [Consultation event](#)

These changes will require approval from the Charity Commission for England and Wales, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. We will be seeking these approvals at the appropriate time, subject to any feedback we receive by the 18th of July. It is possible that one or more of the regulators could suggest changes to the proposed Articles of Association. If this occurs, we will make the membership aware.

The proposed changes to the Articles of RDA UK do not mean that Member Groups must make any subsequent changes to their own governing documents. Since the model governing documents for Member Groups require them to promote the objects of RDA UK, Member Groups will benefit from the increased flexibility that the new objects of RDA UK provide without having to change their governing documents individually. The result is that Member Groups may offer a wider range of activities to their beneficiaries beyond riding and carriage driving **(but will not be obliged to do so)**.

Further information

The two further documents provide greater detail on the proposed changes, and they are available for your information – we welcome all feedback on the proposed changes.

- ['Destination Table – Articles of Association'](#): this document, drafted by our legal partners VWV, outlines the details of the revisions to the Articles of Association. It's the best place to look if you want to understand the details of what is proposed to change.
- [Full draft new RDA UK Articles of Association](#): VWV, our legal partners, have led the work to update the Articles