

5<sup>th</sup> September 2005

Dear colleague,

WEA News, now in its sixth issue, is coming up to its first anniversary. Over the last year, WEA News has been published twice termly and distributed electronically by email, over the WEA website and in hard copy through WEA Regions' cycle of mailings to Branches and tutors.

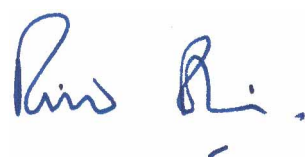
One of the main aims of WEA News is to ensure that everyone who is involved with the WEA, in a paid or voluntary capacity, is kept regularly informed about what is happening in the organisation at large. In an age of rapid electronic communications and perhaps of information overload, the job of the newsletter is to pull together news and information in an interesting and relevant manner, providing context and a regular narrative to events for those having an interest and an influence on the fortunes of the WEA. WEA News aims to give news and, importantly, to receive news and views, aiming to reflect the wide spectrum of opinion across the Association. Although the primary audience for the newsletter is the broad 'internal' WEA network described here, the availability of WEA news on our website means it is also more widely available, and our mail bag/box indicates that partner organisations and government agencies are also finding something of interest in the newsletter.

But are we achieving some of our main aims? Now is your chance to tell us in a readership survey (pages 7 and 8 of this issue) that will help us to evaluate whether WEA News is making a worthwhile contribution and where improvements can be made.

As usual, this issue will be sent out by email and available on the WEA website as well as being sent out by Regions in their regular mailings. In addition, copies are being printed and distributed to all WEA Branches, Trustees and senior managers, and to a mailing list of external organisations, in order to kick start the process of finding out what people think of WEA News.

We look forward to hearing your views!

Best wishes,



Richard Bolsin  
General Secretary



July/August 2005: Issue 6

## Can minister offer Hope to WEA?

General Secretary Richard Bolsin and three colleagues met Phil Hope MP, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Skills, on 21 July to present the WEA's concerns about the future of funding in the further education sector and their possible impact upon WEA provision.

The meeting was held just prior to the LSC's publication of its 'Agenda for Change' prospectus and concentrated on the WEA's position as an adult education provider in the context of LSC priorities around young people and skills. The WEA presented the argument that current proposals could unintentionally have an impact on its work as a recognised provider of liberal education and widening participation across the whole country. The minister acknowledged the difference between the WEA and further education colleges, which tend to have a mix of 16-19 year old and 'adult' provision, of short and long courses, of courses that are accredited and courses that are not. The WEA emphasised the difference between serious liberal education and 'leisure and recreational' provision and the multiple beneficial outcomes of programmes which contribute to an educated society.

The WEA faces twin risks from the rise in course fees that could result from the LSC proposals in 2006/07 - both the direct risk in terms of potential students being unable to afford liberal education courses and subsequent course cancellations, and also the risk to other provision that reaches some of the most excluded communities in England (often in partnership with community organisations and trade unions). Highly leveraged fee increases will have a big impact on low income households and people with little discretionary income - 'hard working families' and fixed income pensioners. The WEA already generates higher fee income on its open provision than colleges, and the complex LSC funding methodology still does not reflect the full costs of outreach work and adult, short course provision. The WEA has worked hard and with success to widen participation and provide serious liberal education within the current funding arrangements. The WEA team argued strongly to the Minister that this balancing of resources is integral to the WEA's distinctive and successful mix of provision and reach.

Also provided at the meeting was evidence of the value of WEA courses - partly in enabling people to move onto other

educational opportunities or employment - but also the wider benefits provided by so many courses. Data was provided from Helping in Schools courses, following which more than half of the participants go on to get jobs in education. The multiple outcomes of education are key to the WEA's work as a national voluntary organisation but could be lost in an agenda for FE that is almost entirely focussed on 16-19 year olds and attempts to identify the needs of employers.

The meeting was positive and Phil Hope made it clear that it was just the start of a dialogue with the WEA. The pressures on his budget are clear and he asked for more evidence of the impact of our work in reaching disadvantaged adults and engaging in serious liberal education that is different to 'leisure and recreational' provision. We will continue to make that case and build provision to support that argument.

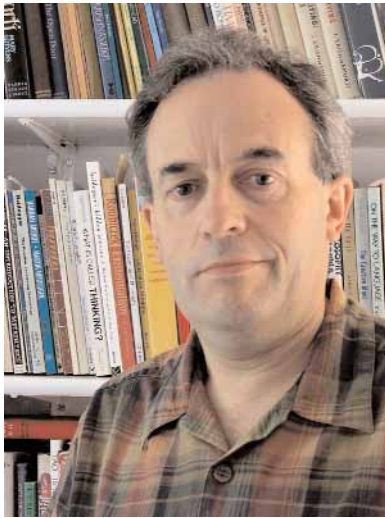
Other organisations in the further education sector are also expressing concerns. For instance, umbrella organisation NIACE has produced a campaigning pack and is actively seeking examples of courses that might have to be cancelled. 138 MPs have so far signed two Early Day Motions in support of the adult education courses at risk from the shift towards funding 16-19 year olds at the expense of other types of provision.

# The inspection: a personal view

By Howard Martin

I am a tutor in philosophy in Surrey. On and off, I've been teaching for the WEA for over twenty years. I am very committed to the whole ethos of the WEA as an organisation that promotes, through its local Branches, the ideal of life long learning for its own sake. We know people come not to further their career as such, but mainly because they're interested in the subject.

The time honoured view is that a successful class depends on the enthusiasm of the tutor, their knowledge of their subject and an ability to communicate effectively. But, apart from gut reaction and of course the fact that students 'vote with their feet', how do we know education is occurring, not just entertainment? How do we measure real learning without sacrificing our cherished non-certificated status? WEA classes are different from the structured environment of school or college. We have to develop our own ways of assessing progress that suit our needs.



All these points were uppermost in mind when preparing for the recent inspection. In a way I was pleased because this year I introduced several changes in my classes to address these questions, and here was an opportunity to get real feedback

(rather than just the nice but flattering comments of students on their end of year appraisals). One thing I began last September was a weekly learning log - a simple pro-forma issued to all students and completed after each session. This is not an original idea, but it was an innovation for me.

Although there was some resistance at first to 'extra paperwork', once they got into the habit, I found students more positive, some even returning them to me in word processed format with additional sheets! Basically I was asking them to indicate the learning points from the session and to indicate areas for further discussion. The logs provided an effective way of recapping on the previous week's work.

It also became a valuable way of identifying student needs and a diagnostic tool for modifying the course syllabus as we went along. End of year paperwork both for students and myself was much easier as a result, as we were evaluating progress as we went along. Students kept copies of logs for their personal files along with handouts, course syllabus, reading list and study methods.

Overall, the learning log, together with my sessional plans, made the inspection a more comfortable process, as I felt able to justify what I was doing without affecting the 'free' ethos of the class. (The inspector seemed happy as well!) It's about seeing whether your aims are being achieved, not imposing external benchmarks. It's about developing (and recording) the good practices that already exist.

I believe that real education does take place in WEA classes and let's not be afraid to demonstrate it!

## Branch Secretary internet area

An internet conference site for Branch Secretaries has been established and can be found at <http://mail.wea.org.uk/branchsecretaries>

The aim of the site is to enable Branch Secretaries across the Association to share information and ideas - and for key documents to be displayed in one place. It includes a discussion forum for Branch Secretaries.

Initially, the site will be administered by Ruth Gould, Education Strategy Manager for Learner Support, but this is only until it gets up and running. If you'd like to include information on the site, contact Ruth on [rgould@wea.org.uk](mailto:rgould@wea.org.uk)

A similar site for tutors already exists at <http://mail.wea.org.uk/tutors>

## DDA Starter Kits for Regions available now

All nine WEA Regions have now received a 'starter kit' of equipment for use to support learners with a range of disabilities. The equipment has been chosen for its ease of use and portability, as well as its value in helping learners gain access to courses. Use of this equipment when required should help the WEA meet its legal requirement

under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to make 'reasonable adjustments' to enable learners with disabilities to enrol on and fully participate in courses and activities. Further equipment may be available through Regional budgets.

For further information, including more detail on the specifications

and use of the items in the table below, please contact your Region or the national Educational Strategy Manager for Learner Support Ruth Gould on [rgould@wea.org.uk](mailto:rgould@wea.org.uk) or 020 7426 1953. WEA staff can also find information on this subject in the FirstClass Education Zone, in the Learner Support/Disability News and Information section.

### Examples of items in the Starter Kit that each Region has received

<b>Equipment to help those with visual difficulties</b>	Keyboard stickers - both braille and high visibility (black on yellow) versions supplied. Two sets of Cerium overlays and testing kit - this can test which of the 12 overlays supplied will be best for a reader with visual difficulties or dyslexia. Magnifiers - five sheet magnifiers and three 'bright field' magnifiers supplied, all of use for those with moderate visual impairment or sight difficulties due to age. Four dictaphones / cassette players - can be used for example to take oral notes, many other potential uses too.
<b>Equipment to help those with hearing difficulties</b>	Two conversors - these are powerful amplifiers that can be used with hearing aids or supplied headphones. A pocket talker - a device that can amplify sound for one user, either with headphones or a hearing aid. A discreet loop system - for use with a hearing aid and supplied neckloop.
<b>Equipment to help those with mobility difficulties</b>	Two lightweight portable ramps for wheelchair users. Three big trackballs - for use with computers instead of a mouse - may also be useful for those with visual impairment.
<b>Other</b>	An IT mini-kit from AbilityNet with a range of hardware and software.

## New Regional Secretary for London arrives



Soraya Patrick has been confirmed as the new Regional Secretary for WEA London Region, and began work in her new post on 5 September.

Soraya's previous job was as Assistant Principal at City College Birmingham, where she began as a teacher 15 years ago before working her way up the management ladder, eventually becoming responsible for community and partnership work including more than £10 million of external project funding. She is also a trained solicitor and has worked for the BBC as a presenter and journalist, including on Radio 4, the World Service and local radio.

Soraya says, "I see this as a time of great opportunity for the WEA in London, with lots of potential funding sources, increasing wealth (despite pockets of deprivation - where I hope the WEA will continue to do some of its most important work) and the Olympics on the way - with a few good ideas and some creativity I'm sure we can achieve a bright future".

Soraya's predecessor Simon Beer will be moving on to the further education sector umbrella organisation NIACE, where he will take up a post as Regional Development Officer for London in the autumn. Staff in London have not seen the last of Simon - he expects to work closely with the WEA in his new role.

## Robin Cook MP

The shock of Robin Cook's sudden death came at a time when the WEA in Scotland was making arrangements to celebrate the centenary of the formation of the first Scottish WEA Branch in Springburn in the north of Glasgow in 1905. Robin Cook was top of the list of speakers for that meeting. Robin was WEA Tutor Organiser for South East Scotland from 1970 until 1974, when he was elected to Parliament. Even today, stalwarts of the Trade Union movement in Scotland talk about the weekend schools he organised and the discussions about transforming society, which would go on into the small hours. In his short interview for 'A Ministry of Enthusiasm', the WEA collection of Centenary Essays, Robin recalls shocking a journalist by naming Ian Jordan, his predecessor as Tutor Organiser, as the person who had most influenced him. "The WEA taught me more about the reality of injustice and the case for social rights than I would ever have got out of books."



FLYING COLOURS / GETTY IMAGES

If the WEA was an influence on Robin, he certainly had an influence on the future direction of the WEA. As Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said in the funeral oration, Robin set about transforming the WEA. With the then District Secretary, Jack Kane, he thought hard about how to draw working people back into our massive liberal class programme. He sought to widen participation back then, a cause which was taken up by his successors in Scotland who gave the WEA a new direction in the mid to late 1970s. That transformation still defines WEA Scotland's work today: education with a social purpose, for those who have benefited least from the system but who, if empowered by learning, could change the system.

As a politician he was marked out as a great orator, with a formidable intellectual capacity, but most of all as a man of principle who would make a stand for what he believed in. Robin Cook was elected to Edinburgh Corporation in 1971-74 while a WEA Tutor Organiser, became MP for Edinburgh Central 1974-83 and for Livingston in West Lothian 1983-2005, Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs 1997-2001, and Leader of the House of Commons and President of Council 2001-2003, when he made a powerful, but clearly painful, resignation speech, unable to support the government policy on Iraq.

## Development Education

A partnership is underway to explore opportunities for the WEA and the Development Education Association (DEA) to work more closely together. The first project to be agreed is a joint conference on the theme of Active Global Citizenship: Partnerships in Policy and Practice.

The DEA promotes better public understanding of global development issues in the UK through education. Its membership includes over 200 organisations, including many working within adult education and community groups, in order to support educators and students in bringing a global perspective to learning.

The conference will take place in London on 30th November. The day will enable WEA and DEA contacts to jointly explore partnership opportunities and learn about each other's work. There are mutual areas of interest between the two groups, including an interest in widening participation through partnerships and a desire to develop an improved understanding of citizenship issues and available funding.

A government speaker will offer a policy perspective to the day and help provide context regarding current funding frameworks.

Further details will be made available nearer the time, but those with an interest in attending are invited to contact Ted Hartley at [thartley@wea.org.uk](mailto:thartley@wea.org.uk) or 01709 360886.

Robin Cook: born 1946 in Bellshill, Lanarkshire, died 6th August 2005.

## Soldiering on in the North East

WEA North East Region has been hard at work for the last nine months establishing vital communications with the Army in the region with a view to delivering Skills for Life provision to some of the many servicemen and women who have yet to attain level 2 qualifications.

This agenda fits with the WEA's national Skills for Life strategy and, in Diana Mahood, the North East Region has the advantage of an ex-squaddie in the ranks. Diana was able to help bridge the "language barrier" and establish clear communications.

On learning about the national initiative regarding Skills for Life courses and the National Test at a Workplace Learning conference in London, Diana sought permission to re-visit old contacts and see what she could establish. As a result it was ascertained that there had been a number of requests for courses to be run within barracks. In other words right up the WEA's street: taking the provision to the learner!

Subsequently, two successful pilot courses were run in early 2005, after which negotiations continued and two tutor induction/familiarisation sessions took place for WEA Skills for Life tutors who chose to be involved with the delivery of courses to soldiers. These sessions were run by Major Jo Bell, Officer Commanding 3 Army Education Centre, and proved invaluable to the tutors.

Finally, on the 27th July, Major Bell and WEA North East Regional Secretary Nigel Todd signed a Memorandum of Agreement to work together in the region (signing pictured at right). The first two courses will be delivered to 39 Regiment Royal Artillery just outside Newcastle in September and October 2005.

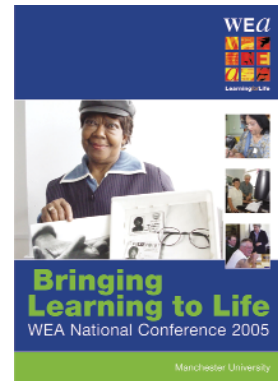


### WEA News - it's official!

The competition for a new title for WEA News was finally judged at the NEC's July meeting. After the second invitation to submit names in December, 34 suggestions were received from a variety of WEA members, tutors and staff. And the result? 'WEA News' was the clear winner receiving 36% of the NEC vote, with 'WEA Matters' coming in second place with 18% of the vote. Although lots of general comments have been made on the title since the newsletter first made its appearance - often along the lines of 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' and 'does exactly what it says on the tin', the only formal entry to the competition to keep the name WEA News came from tutor Bob Groves of Whitley Bay. Congratulations to Bob who will shortly be receiving a bottle of champagne and a £50 book token for his efforts.

## Conference 2005

Bookings are now being taken for the WEA National Conference which will take place on the weekend of Saturday 15 October at the University of Manchester.

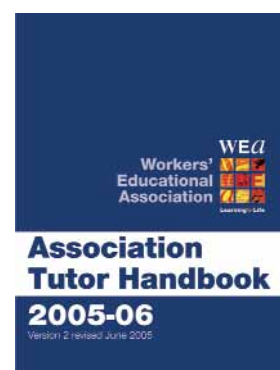


Branches, Scottish Local Associations and Regions should all now have received conference details and booking forms - anyone requiring this information should contact Conference Secretary Angela Clark on 020 7426 or visit the following web page for further information:

[http://www.wea.org.uk/Conference/update\\_05aug.htm](http://www.wea.org.uk/Conference/update_05aug.htm)

## Tutor Handbook

All WEA tutors should receive a copy of the Tutor Handbook for 2005/06. Anyone who has not received the document before they begin teaching should contact their Region or alternatively Education Strategy Manager Audrey Stewart at [astewart@wea.org.uk](mailto:astewart@wea.org.uk) or 020 7426 3488.





# Arrivals, departures and exchanges

## Reg Jefferies

Reg Jefferies, who retired as WEA General Secretary in 1981, died in July 2005. The Association was represented at the Bath funeral by Conference Secretary Angela Clark.

Reg, the middle of 5 brothers, was born in Bristol in 1917. He left school at 14 to become a lorry driver, later taking a degree at Ruskin College and serving as a District Secretary prior to his appointment as General Secretary.

In his address the vicar said Reg would be remembered as a gentleman who encouraged others to enjoy a better life. Following the hymn "Jerusalem" he said Reg would not cease in endless fight to this end. He suggested a fitting tribute to Reg as "There is Life Before Death". Reg Jefferies, whose wife predeceased him, is survived by a brother and many nephews and nieces.

## Southern Region

Structural changes in Southern Region have led to the departure of three tutor organisers. **Lynne Broom**, who has been a part time Tutor Organiser on the Isle of Wight for a number of years, is leaving to sample life in Sri Lanka. **Andy Gunn** and **Linda Dawe**, who have both been part time Tutor Organisers in Buckinghamshire, are leaving these roles to concentrate on their teaching - so they will still be actively involved with the WEA. We wish them all the best of luck.

**Jill Britcher** took over the position of half-time Branch Development and Support Co-ordinator from 1 August 2005.

**Katherine Abrahams**, who had been a Community Worker for

the SureStart Central project in Southampton, left the WEA on 12 August.

## London Region

Two departures from London Region during August: **Diana Asare**, Payroll Administrator and **Alison Ticher**, Tutor Organiser for Family Learning.

**Raul Perez-Varon** joined London Region on 30 June as the SKEIN Project Community Outreach Worker.

Existing staff member **Peter Norfolk** was appointed to the post of Area Learning Manager Trade Union Provision from 1 August 2005.

## London and Southern Hub

Five appointments have been made to the new London and Southern Hub, which is based in the Rochester office and will carry out course administration for both Regions. The appointments have all been made from amongst existing staff. **Zoe Bussley** has taken up the position of Hub Administrator Learner Data Team Leader. **Sharon Kerrison** will be Hub Administrator Community Learning Team Leader and Office Manager. **Alison Rasheed** is to become Hub Administrator Skills for Life Team Leader. **Carol Smith** has taken up the position of Hub Administrator Branch Programme Team Leader, and **Linda Weller** will be Hub Administrator Employer Engagement Team Leader.

## Corporate Services

**Beverly Okere** joined the finance team as Finance Assistant on a temporary basis on 1 August 2005. She will assist with year end related tasks for three to four

months. Beverly previously worked in the Rochester office, Southern Region.

Education Strategy Manager with responsibility for Curriculum **Lee Davies** left on 31 July to go to a post at the Institute for Learning, a new professional body for teachers in the Further Education, Adult & Community Learning and Work-based Learning sectors.

**Hazel Leigh** left the ALAC project team on 9 August for a position with Park Lane College in Leeds.

New IT Support Analyst **Sam Wong** started work on 22 August: Sam will be handling much first-line support and overseeing the flow of calls to Senior Engineers.

## Yorkshire and Humber Region: Rotherham Office

The South Yorkshire Office in Chantry Buildings, Rotherham, closed at the end of July as a result of changes in lease arrangements. General administration functions, carried out by **Ruth Wells**, **Christine Makison** and **Janet Pepper**, will relocate to the Sheffield Learning Centre, 3 Vicarage Road, Attercliffe, Sheffield, S9 3RH. Project Worker **Sue Copestake** will also relocate from Chantry Buildings.

Financial and course administration functions for South Yorkshire will now be undertaken at the Yorkshire & Humber Regional Office in Leeds (main telephone number 0113 245 3304). A transfer and merger of functions was completed on 1 August.

Staff from South Yorkshire Office who have left the WEA or will be leaving over coming weeks include: **Marie Foster**, **Jenny Bostock**, **Christine Coulson**, **Becky Gambles**, **Christine Murphy**, **Lisa Smith** and **Vicky Wells**.



# What do you think of WEA News?

Please help us to make sure that WEA News is worthwhile by completing our short readership survey. No stamp required! Please complete and send to the address on page eight.

1. Which of the following describe your involvement with the WEA? Tick as many as applicable:

- Member
- Branch member
- Student / learner
- Other - please state:
- Tutor
- Tutor organiser / field staff
- Staff member (other than above)
- Trustee
- Regional committee member
- Work for partner organisation

2. How long have you been involved with the WEA?

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-30 years
- Over 30 years

3. Is this the first time you have seen a copy of WEA News (whether electronically or printed)?

- Yes
- No

4. If you have received WEA News previously, in which format(s) have you received it?

- Printed (hard-copy)
- Electronically via e-mail
- Electronically from website

5. Which of the following best describes how you read WEA News?

- Front page only
- Skim read / headlines only
- One or two articles only
- Cover to cover
- Don't read it
- Previously unaware

6. How interesting do you find WEA News?

- Very interesting
- Some parts usually interesting
- Not at all interesting

7. How relevant is WEA News to you?

- Largely relevant
- Some parts usually relevant
- Largely irrelevant

8. Do you feel that WEA News offers a balanced view of the WEA?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

9. Please rate the following aspects and regular sections of WEA News:

	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Quality of writing				
Range of subjects				
Use of images				
Design and layout				

	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Arrivals and departures				
Speakers' Corner				
Branch section				
General Secretary's view				

10. How would you prefer to receive future editions of WEA News?

- By e-mail
  By post in hard copy
  Access via WEA website  
 Do not wish to receive
  Other (please state)

11. Please list any suggestions you may have for improving WEA News - feel free to continue on another sheet.

11. In general, how do you tend to find out your news and information about the WEA? Tick as many as apply.

- Meetings
  WEA website
  Colleagues / friends  
 Post
  FirstClass conferences
  I feel out of touch  
 E-mail
  Other (please specify)

11. In general, which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the information you receive from the WEA? Tick as many as apply.

- Not enough information
  Mainly relevant information  
 Appropriate amount of information
  Mainly irrelevant information  
 Too much information
  Easy to understand information  
 Information which is not easy to understand

Thank you for completing the WEA News survey. The results will be published in the November/December issue of WEA News.

If you would like to be added to the WEA News e-mail distribution list, please write your email address clearly below. (Your email address will not be used for any other purpose, without your permission, unless you have previously provided your email to the WEA for other services)

## Address to return survey to

Please send your survey return (no stamp required) to:

Freepost RLXG-YUAE-AGXY  
 WEA  
 65 Clifton Street  
 London  
 EC2A 4JE

## About WEA News

WEA NEWS is produced for WEA staff, tutors and voluntary members. Many thanks to all who contributed to this edition, including: Angela Clark, Ann Walker, Diana Mahood, Ruth Gould, Joyce Connon and Peter Templeton.

If you have an item for inclusion or would like to comment on the newsletter please let us know. It is not always possible to include all items submitted but every effort will be made to do so.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

WEA NEWS,  
 c/o WEA Corporate Services,  
 Quick House, 65 Clifton Street,  
 London, EC2A 4JE.  
 or emailed to [news@wea.org.uk](mailto:news@wea.org.uk)  
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