**Royal Navy & Royal Marines Riding Stables**

(Bickleigh Saddle Club)

**BUSINESS PLAN**

September 2013

Progress update April 2014

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1. Executive Summary

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Riding Stables (Bickleigh Saddle Club) (RNRMRS) is a UK Registered Charity, (Charity no. 1141412), dedicated to promoting military efficiency by providing affordable equestrian sporting activities for service personnel, their families and associated civilians (MoD Civil Servants). The stables are based within the ‘wire’ at Bickleigh Barracks, Bickleigh, Plymouth, and is an Encroachment on the Commanding Officer 42 Cdo RM. The club is a member’s organisation with approximately 400 members from which over 85% are either service personnel or dependants.

The stables have 8 either full time or part-time paid staff who run the yard on a daily basis, including 2 managers (Business Manager and Yard Manager) who oversee the day-to-day operation. The clubs Executive Management Committee is made up of volunteers who agree the strategic policy and direction of the club with the Chairman reporting to the Managing Trustee (Devonport Naval Base Commodore). All decisions made by the committee and the running of the yard must be in accordance with the agreed RNRMRS Standing Orders, Bickleigh Barracks Standing Orders, MoD Policy and associated relevant legislation. The stables have recently installed accounting and payroll software to modernise its financial procedures and to run alongside a specialist equine management software programme that the staff utilise to manage all aspects of the daily running of the yard. This software runs the daily customer appointments diary, records and manages information relating to the number of hours each horse works and the veterinary records, as well as a variety of other uses and applications.

The RNRMRS have been in existence for over 20 years at a time when there were several stables around the country at RN and RM establishments, for example HMS Dryad, RMB Chivenor, as well as riding stables at Army and RAF establishments. Bickleigh stables are now the last remaining RN and RM stables still in existence and the only service stables run as charity for the benefit of service personnel and their families. The club and stables have been a UK registered charity since 2010 on the basis of ‘promoting military efficiency’ and as such the majority (60%) of any income revenue must come from this area. In 2012/13 the clubs annual turnover was £137K.

An independent auditor reviews the clubs accounts on an annual basis and a return is submitted to the UK Charity Commission.

2. Products and Services

The stables provide a range of equestrian activities to suit all ages and riding abilities from complete beginner to experienced riders. Products and services delivered include;

1. Lessons – available for all ages and abilities either as private lessons, semi-private or groups. Lessons are also available for particular disciplines i.e. dressage, jump lessons.
2. Hacking – either on Dartmoor, Forestry Commission land nearby to the yard or around local area. Hacks are available to suit all abilities as either private, semi private or in groups.
3. Courses and Training – BHS Riding Road Safety, Stage 1 – 3 and NVQ training in equine welfare.
4. Livery – the stables offer Working Livery and Full Livery contracts.
5. Specialist activities and events – Pub Rides, Picnic Rides, Team Building sessions are all available on request.
6. Pony Club – the stables is an Approved Pony Club Centre and runs a popular Saturday and Sunday Pony Club for children.
7. Competitions – the stables aims to run a programme of show jumping and dressage events throughout the year.
8. Associated Organisations – the stables works with Duchy College, Bicton College and Plymouth Learning Trust (PLT) to support students and apprentices. The stables facilities are also utilised by the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) on a weekly basis as well as other specialist groups and schools.
9. Supporting military activities – the stables supports local military activities including Armed Forces Day, Bickleigh Barracks Families Day and the Citadel (29 Cdo RM) families’ day.

3. Market Place and Competitors

RNRMRS is the last remaining RN and RM riding stables in operation. Located in the South West outside Plymouth and on the edge of Dartmoor it is in an ideal geographical position between the RN and RM new entry (Part 1 Training) establishments; HMS Raleigh, Britannia Royal Navy College and Commando Training Centre Lympstone. This means that the yard is able to provide an opportunity for new entry service personnel to experience horse riding, potentially for the first time. Located at Bickleigh RM Barracks and close to HMS Drake, Devonport Dockyard and the MoD Hospital Unit at Derriford Hospital it has a large catchment area of service personnel and families. The stables are also available to be utilised by service personnel who are part of Haslar Company.

There are only a small number of other commercial riding facilities within the local area and the services offered by these commercial stables tends to be limited to certain areas. Few, if any of these, offer the range of services provided by Bickleigh.

Competitors

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| Name, location | Products / Services | Strengths | Weakness |
| Fitzworthy Riding Stables, Ivybridge | Lessons, Hacking | BHS Approved, Pony Club Centre, good access to Dartmoor | Location, small yard |
| Tin Park Trekking Centre | Trekking, hacking | Good access to Dartmoor | No school, do not offer lessons |
| Cheston Equestrian Centre, Ivybridge | Lessons, hacking, livery, Pony Club | BHS Approved, Pony Club Centre, | Location, staff qualifications – NVQ students |
| Wembury Bay Riding School | Lessons, hacking, livery | Newly built outdoor school | Hacking on roads |
| Newton Ferries, Yealmpton | Lessons, hacking, Pony Club, livery | BHS Approved, Pony Club Centre, Indoor school, cross country course, off road hacking | Cost |

As a not-for-profit UK registered charity the stables aims to ensure that its fees for riding activities are always below that of commercial yards. The clubs services are tailored to meet the requirements of service personnel and their families providing opportunities for complete beginners with a limited budget, to experience riders and horse owners, and also offering the flexibility required by service personnel to support their service commitments.

The stables is also very community based demonstrated by its liaison with RDA and other local charities, organisations, schools and colleges. In order to ensure the stables continues as a viable business and charity supporting service personnel and their families, the business strategy is to develop the social enterprise element of the business. Through grant funding the stables will be able to offer riding opportunities to other local charities and non-for-profit organisations.

4. Personnel Profile and Team Skills

Management Committee – made up of volunteers fulfilling the following roles; Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Member, Livery Member, Events Member and Child Protection / Pony Club Member. In accordance with Bickleigh Stables Standing Orders nominations for these positions are voted on at the AGM. The Committee meets on a monthly basis and is also attended by a member of the staff management team.

Paid Staff – currently 2 paid managers; Yard Manager and Business Manager who oversee the daily running of the stables and its services supported by a Deputy Manager and 5 part-time grooms / assistant instructors. All staff hold the appropriate BHS qualifications for their role (Instructor qualifications, BHS Stage 1 – 4, Riding Road Safety), are First Aid trained, have attended Child Protection training and have an in date DBS (previously CRB) certificate.

Students – the club takes on a number of students each year from the Plymouth Learning Trust (PLT) who are studying towards NVQs in Equine Welfare and their BHS Stage 1 and 2 qualifications. The students work at the stables for 3 days a week, supervised by the paid stables staff, and go to college for the remaining two days. They assist as part of their training with general stables duties including mucking out, animal care etc. and are a useful addition to the yards manpower.

5. Facilities

The club facilities include 12 stables / loose boxes, an office, tack room, feed store, rest room / classroom, small hay barn/ shed, car parking, 40 x 20 outdoor ménage, adjacent fields, pasture land (some rented), good access to Forestry commission land and Dartmoor.

The outdoor ménage / school is used for all lessons and is an essential source of income generation for the stables. Although the school riding surface and draining was renewed in 2011 it’s still open to the elements and during the winter and periods of persistent rain, is subject to flooding, resulting in it being unavailable for use.

6. Future – 5 Year Plan

In order for the club / stables to continue as a viable operation and to develop and grow the Management Committee have agreed a number of proposals as part of the business plan and sustainability strategy;

i. Next 6 months; whilst the stables has a turnover of £137K (2011/12) the cash flow and income against expenditure is poor. The immediate action required over the next 6 months is to review all expenditure, including current staffing levels, related to the yard to ensure that the stables is cost effective and maximising income against expenditure. During this period it is important to build a financial reserve, ideally equal to 2 months expenditure, to provide the stables with some financial security particularly going through the winter months – this is still work-in-progress. We have experienced a very challenging time since December 2013, in the main due to circumstances outside of our control.

1. Within 12 months; complete funding processes in order to build a

roof over the existing outdoor ménage to provide an indoor facility. In 2012 the club lost approximately £20,000 worth of business due to the ménage being out of use due to flooding. It is proposed to apply for grant funding to finance the building of an enclosed roof over the existing school. By making the school and indoor facility this will enable it to be used all year round no matter the weather. There would also be potential to use the facility for other events i.e. demonstrations, competitions, to bring in additional revenue. By having an indoor facility the club would be able to increase its capacity to provide more riding activities without fear of these being cancelled due to poor weather and / or flooding – this is currently underway and we are hopeful that we will have a clear idea of whether the funding will be approved by June 2014

Actions required;

1. Quotations for building work required – completed Q1 2014
2. Investigate planning permission – completed Q1 2014
3. Submit funding applications i.e. Armed Forces Community Covenant, RN & RM Charity etc – completed Q1 2014
4. Liaise with DIO and CO Bickleigh Barracks with regard to the practical logistics of the build project – completed Q2 2014
5. Implement a plan to ensure riding activity can continue at the stables during the build – planned for Q3 2014
6. Produce project timetable – planned for Q3 2014
7. Manage the build – planned for Q3 2014
8. Develop new areas of business working with other charities and

organisations within the local civilian community. Building on the existing success of the current relationship with the RDA and Plymouth City Council (Children’s University member, Armed Forces Day (HMS Heroes) events), the club would seek to obtain grant funding to provide riding opportunities for other charities and groups i.e. local schools, and organisations supporting people with disabilities and special needs. Develop ‘grassroots’ activities supporting younger riders and provide them with the opportunity and backing to develop their potential. This would build on the success of the UK Olympic and Para-Olympic UK equestrian teams last year – the club has recently joined the Plymouth chamber of Commerce to leverage the Plymouth business community and provide access to professional and support services to help make the club more professional and efficient

Volunteer Project. Establish a grant funded volunteer programme supported by a part-time paid Volunteer Coordinator. Providing volunteer opportunities at the yard will give additional support for the existing stables staff and increase the stables profile within the local community and voluntary / charity sector – awaiting decision on the grant funding for this project

1. 2014/15; Establish a trading arm to the stables, Community

Interest Company or similar, to develop business and income generation in areas outside of the remit of the charity by selling and promoting the stables services to non-military organisations. Any profit raised from this activity would then be transferred back to the charity to further support the clubs work for the service community and members – planned for Q1 2015 after the roof is completed on the school

The key element of the stables future and development is being able to make the existing outdoor ménage an indoor facility. This first stage, after ratifying the stables finances to ensure a sound financial base, will ideally be completed in 12 – 18 months. The indoor facility will provide the stables with greater capability to deliver riding activities unhindered by weather conditions and therefore enabling greater income potential.

With immediate effect the stables should investigate and submit applications for grant funding to support the delivery of riding activities for specific communities within the Plymouth area i.e. disadvantaged children and young people from Plymouth inner city schools, disabled and special needs groups

Establishing a robust volunteer programme at the stables will support the existing staff as well as providing other opportunities for individuals to support the aims of the stables charity status as well as enabling the yard to be more inclusive to a broader community.

The development of new relations and funding support should run concurrent with the building proposal to allow the stables as a social enterprise business model to expand with the increase in revenue and profit utilised to support the charitable aim in delivering riding activities to service personnel and their families and developing closer links between the local civilian and service communities. The establishment of a separate trading company / CiC is dependant on the new build to ensure that the stables has the capacity to support any additional requirements.

Longer term; over the next 5 years, the plan will be to establish RNRMRS as a major equestrian facility in the South West continuing to support service personnel and their families in providing affordable equestrian activities for all abilities and levels of riding experience, and to also provide facilities for use by the local civilian community and community groups as well as delivering commercial activities and events to generate income to support the charities primary goal.

7. Summary

RNRMRS is in a unique position as the last RN and RM riding stables. The stables is ideally located within Bickleigh Barracks, on the edge of Dartmoor, within 5 miles of Plymouth City centre, centrally located between the RN and RN new entry training establishments (HMS Raleigh, CTCRM, BRNC) and near to HMNB Devonport and HMS Drake. In order for the charity / business to grow and provide a sustainable business model for the future it needs to look to new areas of business and new markets. In order to do this it must have the facilities to support these activities.

A sustainable future for the stables must include a number of key factors;

i. The stables must be in a financially secure position with income exceeding expenditure.

ii. The establishment of a volunteer programme.

iii. Provide community opportunities supporting the aims of the stables charity, increasing access to the stables and riding activities to other areas of the local community, particularly schools, children and young people, disabled individuals and new riders.

iv. The stables require the facilities to support this additional activity and hence putting a roof on the existing school is essential to ensure the yard has a truly all weather facility.

v. In order to generate further income it will become necessary to establish a trading arm to manage new external business and so as not to jeopardise the existing charity status.

This business model will ensure that the stables and charity will be able to continue to provide affordable equestrian activities to service personnel and their families whilst opening the facilities to other communities in the Plymouth area. This will help to promote inclusion and greater communication between the services and civilian communities whilst also supporting deserving groups.