RDA is renowned and respected for its sympathetic and unobtrusive volunteer management and although problems are rare, it would be unwise for a Group not to have a problem-solving policy in place and be aware of the help and advice that is freely available should it be required. Complaints from and about members of the Group should be recognised and resolved as quickly as possible.

Avoiding problems in the first place is better than having to solve them

Avoiding problems is always the best strategy, and a few simple procedures will take care of the majority of those little irritations that we all experience from time to time. For example:

- Appoint a Volunteer Coordinator and publicise the appointment to the volunteers.
- Communicate with your volunteers:
  - Tell them what is going on and include them in debates and consultations;
  - Get to know them and promote their strengths to stimulate involvement;
  - Make sure they know that they are valued and respected.

Drafting a Problem-Solving Policy

A policy document needs to be as clear as possible, and simple flow-charts illustrating the chain of action for complaints from different sources may be helpful. The following points require consideration:

- Any person from RDA or the general public may make a complaint about a volunteer, participant, or an event;
- A complaint may be about the conduct of an individual or of the Group.

The following should be included:

- How the Group will manage complaints: response time, confidentiality, notes and records of discussions;
- To whom in the Group complaints should be addressed;
- The initial procedure to resolve the complaint: discussion, research, explanation, proposals and action;
- Subsequent stages and procedures within the Group if the initial procedure is not accepted;
- A final, independent enquiry procedure for complaints that cannot be resolved within the Group.

N.B. Your volunteers are an important source of material for a Problem-Solving Policy, so why not get them involved in designing it?

Sources of Help, Advice and Support for All

Volunteers, Groups and Volunteer Coordinators do not work in isolation – there is always help at hand and somebody to talk to. You could contact your County or Regional Chairmen, and you could speak directly to:

Matthew Cobble, RDA Volunteer Development Coordinator
Direct line: 01926 405 966 Email: mcobble@rda.org.uk