**FORMING A LOCAL CHAPTER OF THE VMC**

I have been made aware that some of you might be hoping to form an LC. You may refer to the Bylaws and the Policies and Procedures of the Club – these documents are available on the website.

It is worth noting that according to the Policies and Procedures of the VMC:

*“the VMC Board will not grant charters to state or broad-based geographical areas. As the local chapter grows it must reflect the* ***local*** *nature of its members“*.

This having been said, the VMC does recognize that *sometimes* in overseas locations membership numbers or geography preclude this being strictly applied, but it would always be our strong preference to see a Local Chapter being just that – Local! Exceptions include our LCs in Belgium and Luxembourg – both relatively small countries, and with all their members living within an easy ride of each other. Both are very successful LCs, and both have celebrated 5 years as LCs in 2020.

History shows us that where LCs have been formed on a wide geographical basis, it is very difficult for them to truly function as a LC, whereas those formed on a more local basis have tended to be the more successful.

An example is LC Friuli – they are local to each other and have been VMC members for some time and have shown a strong dedication to the VMC, with good motivation and determination. They were therefore a strong candidate for LC status.

Another example is Scotland – whilst they met the strict requirements of the Policies and Procedures of the Club, the members there have demonstrated a respect for the meaning and purpose of forming an LC, and they been working hard for some months before applying for the LC membership process. They have taken their time to strengthen their case, not rushed into it. They have decided to apply as a separate LC from the rest of UK for geographic reasons. As a (prospective) LC in Scotland they can meet and ride together regularly, and support each other fully as brothers in the VMC. It will make their application much stronger and achievable.

This sort of approach, demonstrated by both LC Friuli and prospective LC Scotland (and several others who have been in discussion for months), is respectful to the VMC and respectful also respectful to other LCs which have been in existence for some years and which take the concept of being in an LC seriously. Presuming that anyone can form an LC just for asking, almost demanding, is the opposite and demonstrates a lack of understanding of what a true LC means in a real motorcycle club. This is not just some Facebook group where anyone can claim anything.

Another interesting example is England. They *could* be another strong candidate to form an LC, and even more so now that they have agreed that Scotland will be a separate LC from them as it now makes more sense geographically. They may apply and I am hopeful that they will. They have strong membership numbers, and even at their lowest point still had more than enough to meet the critieria – now they have 3 or 4 times the minimum number. They have had VMC members for years, indeed, one being a Charter Member, as already mentioned. However, they have decided to focus on building themselves up with local meetings, frequent conference calls, rides together, and so on, before they will even consider applying. They have demonstrated that geographically they can, and do, meet and function as a LC. This would have been less realistic if they had included Scotland, simply because of travel times from our members there. They will not apply to form an LC until and unless they are completely sure that they wish to be an LC. I respect that approach – it is sensible and respectful towards the VMC.

There are several other groups which are interested to form LCs in Europe and beyond, and I have been working with them for months. But they are taking their time and building up locally, not only in numbers but in developing their ideas and the views of their members – whether or not they really want to form an LC. They also know that they have to show their determination and dedication before formally applying, and some are doing that right now. Again, this shows that they are taking it seriously, and they are being respectful to the VMC, and demonstrating that they understand the reasons to form an LC. It is not at all about whether a prospective LC has 5 members or 50 – it is about motivation, dedication to the VMC, honesty, respect and loyalty.

My final point on LCs is that of course any new application to form an LC where there is already an LC in existence in that area would not be considered. Using UK as an example – if Scotland achieves LC status first, any future application to form a UK wide LC (including Scotland) would be immediately rejected. (I know this will not happen in UK, but I am simply using it as a convenient example.) Also, and I have said already, according to the rules of the Club, LC status would not be granted on a national level, and where exceptions to this are granted there have to be very compelling reasons.

I mention all this in some length because I want to be clear that we do not simply grant LC status to anyone who asks. There are some simple criteria enshrined in our Bylaws and Policies and Procedures, but we also would wish to be convinced of all the other issues which I have mentioned, above, before even considering an application. Unlike many internet groups, we not simply say “ok, no problem”. Any application has to meet the critieria, but also persuade us of their motivation, loyalty, integrity honesty and their dedication to the Club. This does not happen overnight!

The well-being of the Club as a whole must come before any personal, LC or Regional issues, and it is this commitment and belief we wish to see in any new application to form an LC.