

Chairman's Opening Statement for the 43rd Annual General Meeting 2014 at the Royal Victoria Hotel. Llanberis

I welcome you to the 43rd Annual General Meeting of The Heather Society here at the Royal Victoria Hotel at Llanberis,

The Society and members of Council are especially grateful to Phil Joyner in continuing to fulfil the post as secretary, Phil, with his background knowledge and dedication has enabled the smooth running of the Society and its continuity to date

As with previous years the Society continues to manage its declining finance reserves, economising where possible, whilst maintaining its publications and service to its members; likewise many other societies face a similar situation, Whilst the membership fee was increased this year in an attempt to improve the revenue of the Society regrettably it resulted in a loss of members renewing and subsequently a reduction in membership income.

The Society is immensely grateful for recent endowments from two of its members to replenish the Societies coffers.

Regional groups have continued to struggle with attendances and the efforts of the organisers are appreciated. I am especially grateful to Barry Sellers for taking on board the contact and organisation of the Home Counties Group in association with RHS Wisley and the representation of the Heather Society at their meetings.

The cuttings swop scheme remains in the care of Brian Burling and I look forward to its publication in the member's area of the new website.

The status and role of our administrator is undergoing revision and we hope for the approval of the Charity Commissioners that would enable Charles Nelson to become a full Council member. Council welcomes applications from members to sit on Council to enable its function to continue.

The Heather Society is regulated as a registered charity and as such is constrained by its rules and regulations. Serious consideration should be given as to whether these constraints may detrimentally affect the long term viability of the Heather Society.

Decreasing membership and attendances at Conference will require the quorum numbers to be revised within the rules of the constitution.

The Society again had a presence this year at The Hampton Court RHS Garden Show. Forest Edge Nurseries undertook to construct an exhibit within the Floral Marque under the banner of The Heather Society gaining a Silver Medal. Thanks go to the members of the Society for assisting in the manning of the stand, handing out Heather Society publicity and providing valued advice to members of the public. An application has been made to exhibit again in the Floral Marque for 2015.

The Societies website continues to provide information worldwide as to its function and activities. However as with all facilities, this requires regular updating. The Society is

grateful to Council member Dave Brown for his experience and commitment to update the website allowing for a 'on line' membership joining facility and a 'members only' access area which will hopefully increase the demand for and facilitate membership. However it requires time and financial investment and it has been agreed to utilise the funds from an aforementioned endowments.

It is vitally important that the Society increases its membership to retain its function and viability. A facility to encourage electronic applications and payment where these can be made via the website with ease and simplicity is an urgent requirement.

The National Heather Collection remains at Wisley and we hope for the input of additional time and investment at this site. We encourage the onward development of additional comprehensive planting at Perth. Progress has made at Holehird Gardens in the Lake District to apply for National Collection status of Daboecias .

I wish to thank all the members of Council for their attendance at meetings and their valued input contributing to the running of the Society. Especially our administrator Dr E C Nelson, secretary Phil Joyner, Conference manager S Kay, Treasurer R Canovan, our council members Ian Duncan Grant, Andrew Collins, Barry Sellers and our bulletin editor Daphne Everett.