

Chairman's Opening Statement for the Annual General Meeting –2016 at the Royal George Hotel, Perth, Scotland

I welcome you to the Annual General Meeting of The Heather Society here at the Royal George Hotel, Perth, Scotland.

Whilst it is with great pleasure that we welcome the nomination of Mrs Allison Fitz-Earle to Council it is with deep regret that we note the resignation of our administrator Dr Charles Nelson from the position of Administrator and also from Council. In addition Daphne Everett will relinquish the post of bulletin Editor after the next issue and 25 years of dedication to the position. The Society is indebted to Dr Nelson and Daphne Everett for their valued contribution and years of service.

Due to the sudden and unexpected resignation of our Administrator Dr Charles Nelson (letter received dated 12th July) it has been necessary to urgently make alternative arrangements.

Council members Dave Brown, Secretary Phil Joyner, and myself met locally to discuss and put arrangements in place to continue and maintain the workings of the Society to be approved at the next Council Meeting/AGM

As may be viewed on the Heather Society Contacts page the role of administrator has ceased in name and its functions and responsibilities are delegated as follows.

The address of the secretary (Phil Joyner) will be used as the Societies registered postal address and for all matters of Society Governance queries.

Mrs Allison Fitz-Earle has agreed to be the societies' membership secretary, Membership queries, login, etc.

Mr Dave Brown remains with responsibility for the website, content queries

Mrs Samantha Barnes is the contact for general Society enquiries and those relating to the cultivation of heathers. (note; this is a paid position)

At a further local meeting, this time between the Secretary, the Treasurer and myself, previous complications and issues surrounding the separation of the posts of Treasurer and Administrator, which also incorporated Membership, were discussed. The proposal, to be agreed, is to combine the positions of Treasurer and Membership Secretary, facilitating the transfer and updating of information more easily and efficiently to the benefit of the Society and its members.

The Heather Society website continues to be updated by Council member Dave Brown. It has the facility of an exclusive members only area with an online payment facility via Paypal facilitating an easier method of making membership and other payments to the Society. In addition he has added many photographs of the individual heather varieties to enhance the site.

The Society repeated a presence in 2016 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 Gilt Medal. My thanks go again to those 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.

Council member John Hall, with the assistance of Society members has continued to promote the Society and heathers at RHS Wisley events. In addition John is continuing to liaise with the hierarchy of the Wisley RHS regarding the proposed re development of the heather collection.

Regional groups have continued to struggle with attendances and the efforts of the organisers Jean Preston and Dorothy Warner are appreciated. The Society is grateful to Council member Barry Sellers and others for the representation of the Society Home Counties Group in association with

RHS Wisley.

Daphne Everett has undertaken the running and organisation of the cuttings swap scheme. The Society will endeavour to continue this scheme as a benefit to Society membership.

Decreasing membership and attendances at Conference will require the quorum numbers to be monitored and amended within the rules of the constitution. Council welcomes applications from members to sit on Council to enable its function to continue.

The National Heather Collection remains at Wisley and we continue to hope for the input of additional time and investment at this site. We encourage the onward development of additional planting at Perth and continue to support the National Collection status of Holehird Gardens in the Lake District for its comprehensive collection of *Daboecia*

In addition I thank all the members of Council for their attendance at meetings and their valued input contributing to the running of the Society throughout the past year . Especially Dr E C Nelson, secretary Phil Joyner, Conference manager Susie Kay, Treasurer Richard Canovan, our council members Andrew Collins, Barry Sellers, Dave Brown, John Hall, our bulletin editor Daphne Everett and our Slide Librarian, Jean Preston.

David Edge
Chairman