

Chairman's Opening Statement for the 55th Annual General Meeting -

I welcome you to the 55th Annual General Meeting of The Heather Society here at RHS Wisley. Hillside Centre, Surrey. RHS Wisley.

It is with regret that during the past year both John Hall and Andy Collins have resigned from Council. Council is indebted to both for their attendance and assistance with Society affairs.

John Hall has been involved with the production of replacement plants for the new planting at RHS Wisley, quite a momentous task, Following the closure of his nursery I hope that the RHS and the Wisley planting will become more associated with the Society and its membership.

Council has decided that the future formation of the Society, following its dissolution as a Charity, should be in the form of an Unincorporated Association. This will be a simpler arrangement and with a reduced workload for Council members will hopefully allow the continuation of the Society for the foreseeable future.

Council has garnered names for the entitlement of the, yet to be formed, new Heather 'club' and bank account.

Proposals for a new name are as follows and Council welcomes suggestions.

Heather Friends

Heather Society Friends

Heaths and Heathers Association

International Heather Society

The Heather Experience

The Heather Guild

The Heather Club

The New Heather Society

In accordance with the member's agreement at the 2017 AGM Council member Richard Canovan, has initiated the liquidation of the Society's investments. The majority of these are now liquidated and made more easily accessible for consideration and benefit of 'heather orientated projects'.

Council thanks Richard for his assistance with this task.

The Society welcomes proposals for the donation of support funding for such suitable projects.

Council will give consideration to the time of ceasing membership subscriptions to the Society as agreed one year before its deregistration.

Samantha Barnes continues in a paid position to deal with or re-direct queries received via the "admin" e-mail address alongside her Newsletter Editor duties.

Council's thanks Samantha for her continued monitoring of Society e-mail correspondence and collation and publication of the Society newsletter.

Council also thanks Dave Brown, for his continuing work with the website, the Facebook page and expanding the number of cultivar descriptions and images and is indebted to Barry Sellers for his organisation of this meeting and Wisley weekend.

The Hon. Secretary has been tasked to draw up a draft copy of the rules for the new society. The new society will be predominately internet based and a name chosen to be as close to the name "The Heather Society" as possible. Once a name had been selected and the rules agreed then a Committee of interested persons will be formed and a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer chosen from amongst those persons. Once that point has been reached then a bank account will be set up with a nominal sum of money and Council members have offered to provide small sums of money for that purpose. It would be preferable if the bank account was not with Lloyds if only to avoid any confusion with The Heather Society's

Current Account which is with Lloyds. The source of monies to run the new society could be by donation, invited from persons viewing a website, or by membership although having a membership presents another level of administration. The question of whether monies could be “donated” from The Heather Society whilst still in existence remains an issue.

Membership and finances are managed by Mrs Ally Fitz-Earle and Council extends its gratitude to her for her continuing assistance and monitoring of these subject matters. Membership numbers are up and the database is looking good, mainly due to the GDPR mailshot which helped updated the records immensely.

At the 2017 AGM the floor of the AGM required Council to put the monies from the liquidation of the investments to good uses. John Hall proposed that The Heather Society make a donation to the RHS, not for the planting, but for an item(s) to aid the public awareness of the Collection, the importance of the Collection and heather cultivation in general. It was agreed that this proposal and others including Riverside Gardens in Perth, Holehird and other new ventures be considered.

The functions of Council and the Heather Society it governs are totally dependent on the ability of its Councillors to give of their abilities and time to ensure its function and ongoing well-being. As in previous years I thank all Council members for their time, attendance, input at meetings and additional duties on behalf of the Society and especially the continuing and valued input of our Secretary Phil Joyner.

David Edge

Chairman
The Heather Society