

Chairman's Opening Statement for the 2019 Annual General Meeting -

I welcome you all to the Annual General Meeting of The Heather Society here at the Harlow Carr.

The Society has performed well this year to date with all its functions and responsibilities being addressed.

Our President is Prof John Griffiths, secretarial duties have been undertaken by Phil Joyner, membership and finances by Mrs Ally Fitz-Earle. Group meetings Barry Sellers and the Society web Master Dave Brown. The rest of Council consists of Susie Kay, Richard Canovan, and myself as Chairman. Mrs Samantha Barnes as News Letter Editor and Society contact. Daphne Everett continues as Cutting Exchange co-ordinator.

David Edge remains as Registrar in a personal capacity.

The existing Council quorum number is proposed to be reduced due to previous resignations, without an agreed quorum Council cannot complete its business hence the proposition to follow in Agenda item 5. An active and viable Society as proposed in its new format will enable there to be a nuclear body and site of information for those wishing to gain unique valued advice and information about heathers. Currently that responsibility falls on the shoulders of a small number of dedicated number of Council members and this may place the position of the Society in jeopardy unless additional assistance is forthcoming.

With the proposed closure of the Heather Society issues have arisen as to the disbursement of its assets. Council awaits the liquidation by Richard Canovan of its remaining assets, allowing for the current political position with the UK and Brexit it may be a consideration to extend the dissolution of the Society until liquidation is finally completed.

The disbursement of the Societies funds requires careful consideration allowing that these have been consolidated over the years from membership fees and donations. The intention of donations to provide for the viable future of the Society and for any defined project or aims must be a consideration by Council. Members may wish to consider the heritage of the Society and its past members, built up since its conception in the 1960's and how this heritage can be carried forward into the future.

Registered heather collections by Plant Heritage are sited at RHS Wisley and Nymans garden, other collections are at Holehird and Perth. The planting at RHS Wisley is establishing but currently has a problem with Oxalis weed infestation.

These collections remain a valuable source of rare and unusual varieties that are now not found in general cultivation, my view is that numerous old cultivars are now lost to cultivation and as such this gene source is at risk bearing in mind changeable climatic conditions.

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.

David Edge