

**Minutes of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of  
The National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies  
(a company limited by guarantee)  
held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at Kensington Town Hall**

**Company Registration No. 4307984  
Registered Charity No. 1089743  
OSCR: SC039240**

**1. Chairman's welcome**

The Chairman's welcome address is reproduced in full on the NADFAS website at [www.nadfas.org.uk](http://www.nadfas.org.uk), and is available on request from NADFAS House.

**2. Apologies for absence**

The list of apologies is held at NADFAS House, and is available there for inspection.

**3. Minutes of the 8th Annual General Meeting held on 7th May 2009**

*The minutes of the AGM held on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009 were approved.*

**4. Report of the Chairman**

The Chairman's address is reproduced in full on the NADFAS website at [www.nadfas.org.uk](http://www.nadfas.org.uk), and is available on request from NADFAS House.

**5. The Hon. Treasurer's Report**

The Hon. Treasurer's Report is reproduced in full on the NADFAS website at [www.nadfas.org.uk](http://www.nadfas.org.uk), and is available on request from NADFAS House.

The Chairman then invited questions on the Financial Statements. There were none.

*The Chairman proposed and it was carried that the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2009 be adopted by members.*

**6. Appointment of Kingston Smith as Auditors for the ensuing year**

*The Chairman proposed and it was carried that Kingston Smith (Chartered Accountants) be appointed as auditors for the ensuing year.*

**7. Priorities for 2010 (Chief Executive)**

The Chief Executive's presentation is reproduced in full on the NADFAS website at [www.nadfas.org.uk](http://www.nadfas.org.uk), and is available on request from NADFAS House.

**8. Notice of the election of Trustees**

There were three vacancies to be filled this year and it was very encouraging that eleven candidates came forward. The Chairman expressed the hope that a number of members attending the AGM may consider joining the Trustee Board at some time in the future, thanked everyone who stood this year, and encouraged those not elected this time to consider offering their talents in other ways to NADFAS.

The Trustees starting their term following this AGM were announced in alphabetical order, Jill Makepeace-Warne, Miles Roberts (both re-elected for a second three year term) and June Robinson.

## 9. General Question Session

### AGM 2010: Written questions and answers from members

In the last Societies Bulletin members were invited to write in with any questions that they would like to present at this session.

This year written questions were received from **Elizabeth Field, Chairman of West Dorset DFAS**, with a general theme of membership support.

**Q1.** We note that the Trustees have started a review of all Board policies; when can we expect a summary of potential initiatives, in particular relating to the cost of individual membership? The consolidated financial statements in para.4 of the 'plans for future periods' refers to supporting Societies. To what extent will Societies be consulted?

**Q2.** We note that 5 new societies have been inaugurated; how many have ceased to exist?

**Q3.** What is the minimum level of a Societies membership considered by the Trustees to be viable?

David Bell answered as follows:

#### **Societies Closing**

Dealing firstly with Societies that have closed, there have in recent years been only three:

In 2003 the Rheindahlen Society in Germany closed. Because of the relocation of armed forces in the region, its membership had fallen to 30 and the committee felt that it was unable to continue. In 2007 there was the loss of Godalming DFAS in Surrey. When it closed there were some 240 members and sufficient finances for them to very kindly make a donation of £1,700 to the Patricia Fay Memorial Fund. The reason for their closure was that they were unable to agree succession of key committee posts, especially that of Chairman. After a period of recycling of committee members, those on the committee felt that they could not continue. Nobody was able to come forward to take over and save the Society.

In 2009, the DFAS at Antwerp advised that it would have to close in mid 2010. The 41 members remaining at that Society decided that they did not have sufficient membership or hope of greater demand locally and therefore they could not carry on.

It is encouraging that the closure of a Society is as you can see, extremely rare. We would expect it to be as a result of very particular changes to local circumstances. It is perhaps a warning though that without succession planning a Society can also become extremely vulnerable to closure, very rapidly.

This is the sort of issue where the Area Chairman and if required, the Societies Support Team can offer a range of measures to help on the key concerns of membership recruitment, committee recruitment and succession.

#### **Minimum viable membership**

This leads on then to a consideration of the next question concerning the minimum viable number of members. This can vary a great deal and will very much depend on specific circumstances. We might usefully consider a New Society separately to an existing Society with falling numbers.

I thought that you might like some facts concerning some of the recently inaugurated Societies.

Oxford DFAS inaugurated with 180 members in September 2009 and has subsequently expanded to 196 members and a waiting list of 96.

Fylde DFAS inaugurated at the same time with 190 members and now has 216.

In January 2009, North Buckinghamshire DFAS began with 150 members and are now up to 183. At the same time, South Cambs DFAS inaugurated with 200 members and now has 256 with a waiting list of 10.

The New Societies Team will always ensure that a New Society is financially viable and historically this has meant looking at a minimum starting point of say 150 but possibly as low as 100. The venue cost means everything in this equation. A small number of members in a large expensive venue presents a different situation to the same number in smaller and perhaps less costly venue.

There is more of a challenge when considering an existing Society that may be experiencing a significant drop in membership numbers. If such a Society remains at a venue where the ideal number of members has been lost, a potential budget deficit may appear until numbers are restored or a new venue is found that is suitable to the number of members. If this happens, it is a tough challenge that a number of Societies have managed their way through. Again, the Area and Support Team can work in tandem to offer crucial support at such a worrying time.

### **Initiatives and consultation**

The final part of the question concerns consultation, policies and membership initiatives.

The policies referred to in the annual report are those key policies that Trustees have to review on a regular basis in terms of good governance. These guide actions on key practices like the child protection policy, the expenses policy, the investments policy, magazine editorial policy, commercial activities policy. These dictate what action is taken managerially at House and Area level, and on some we have shared guidance where societies might find it useful to adopt similar policies.

The question of consultation is a very important one. When talking to other national organisations they often remark how impressed, almost envious they are that NADFAS as a whole has a strong bottom up organisational structure. Our members are involved in setting future strategies and initiatives. The Area meetings are an important part in this. Twice a year the elected Area Chairmen bring back to the Advisory Council these local views on current strategies and projects along with any new concerns or considerations.

Annually, the Area Chairmen prepare a very comprehensive consultation and feedback document called the Area Composite Report. The Advisory Council feedback and the reports are scrutinised in great detail by Trustees when they deliberate future plans and budgets. The projects that you have heard us talk about today have arisen through this process.

Thinking of how initiatives are designed to help the members; The IT project for example has from its inception been about the desire to streamline and simplify the various Society and Committee tasks. But in short, all major initiatives decided upon by the Trustee Board will have been discussed at the Advisory Council. There is a clear consultation cycle that involves the membership.

On considering the costs of individual membership; joining a NADFAS Society even in these challenging times remains, extremely good value for money. However, the Trustees are not complacent and this is why the current history of increases to the affiliation fee has been modest. From 2004 to 2007 it was held at £10.25 and this year rose from £10.75 to £10.90 with a forecast of £11.15 for 2011.

The Chairman then invited verbal questions:

**Q4. Sue Grace (Truro DFAS)** asked whether a lecturer from London was entitled to charge the Society taxi fares incurred on arrival back in London.

The Chairmen reminded the meeting that all negotiations on fees and any additional expenses between lecturers and societies should be undertaken and clarified before the booking is made.

**Q5. Michael Jeans-Jakobsson (South West area Chairman)** very much enjoyed the podcast about NADFAS but observed that there were no men in it, and that some Societies were almost exclusively ladies, and asked whether this is something that should be addressed.

The Chairman noted Michael's comment and added that he might find it helpful to note that she was the only woman on a platform of men.

**Q6. John Howat (Tring Park DFAS)** was concerned that the lecturers report forms were not being used to provide feedback to the lecturers and that lecturers that he had spoken to did not seem interested in the feedback process.

David Bell replied that the 3,500 forms processed are an extremely important part of the ongoing quality assurance for the NADFAS Directory of lecturers. Lecturers can review their files at NADFAS House and Katherine Hill, Education Manager, encourages them to do so. If there are matters reported to us that require a slightly more structured discussion then that takes place as well.

Katherine Hill added that every one of our 289 lecturers receives feedback on all the reports that are sent in on a yearly basis and they take them very seriously. In addition about 50 lecturers a year visit NADFAS House to look through their files. Others have asked for feedback on the telephone and by e-mail.

**Q7. Anna Astin (Royal Tonbridge Wells DFAS)** asked whether, in view of the difference in cost between London and 'out-of-town' AGMs, the forthcoming Edinburgh AGM in 2011 is worthwhile.

David Bell replied that consultation with the membership had taken place through the Area Meetings and encouragement fed back for taking the meeting out of London on occasions. Members have felt that NADFAS is a national organisation and certainly not centred on London. It helps raise awareness locally about NADFAS and has, in at least one instance, been the catalyst for the setting up of a new Society. The costs are closely monitored and the decision was made two years ago to reduce the frequency of 'out-of-town' AGMs from alternate years to once every third year.

**Q8. Marjorie Power (Regents Park DFAS)** wanted to make two points on the Lecturer report forms. First, the London Area sends a summary of the lecturers' categorisation before the area meetings, which is useful when programme planning. Secondly, the committee did not like the 'Yes/No' format for the new Lecture Review forms.

David Bell replied that NADFAS consulted with a number of users and tested the new format and didn't think that it is considerably different than the previous form. The overall majority of feedback is that people welcome the new structure, although a small number of Societies had commented that they prefer the old version

The Chairman then added that there will be an opportunity in November at the Lecturers Forum to give more feedback.

**Q9. Ann Wickham (former chairman of Church Recording)** commented that at this meeting we have heard about the invaluable work of both the Heritage Volunteers and the Church Recorders, yet of the total membership of NADFAS it seems a steady four percent only actually volunteer for these tasks, and asked whether NADFAS can raise the profile of Volunteering.

David Bell said that one of our challenges has been to make sure that we have a very coherent way to actually sell the volunteering disciplines to our own members. He added that the membership have enjoyed reading the volunteering supplement started in the 40th anniversary year, which was so successful that it was decided to keep it going. So with the next NADFAS Review members will receive another volunteering supplement. Our feedback is that people find it a useful way of focussing on Young Arts, Church Recording and the Heritage Volunteers all together and showing members the great work that they are doing. The podcasts that have been created both last and this year have are widely available and will hopefully persuade our membership that these are really worthwhile activities to join.

**Q10. Jennifer Harding-Edgar (Edinburgh DFAS)** commented (on AGM's) that it's perfectly possible to book a train ticket from Edinburgh to London for less than she had paid for the Gatwick Express that morning. Also, Scottish lecturers have often found that, when they meet members at the Directory meeting, representatives from the more southerly Societies are reluctant to book them because of the perception that the travel costs will be high. Value travel to or from Scotland is possible, especially with advance booking.

The Chairman offered her thanks for the observation.

**Q11. Philippa Hill (Ashford DFAS)** asked whether there is a policy about job sharing for Society Chairmen or Vice-Chairmen.

The Chairman replied that job-sharing Chairmen had attended the last New Chairman's day at NADFAS House, and reminded Societies that they are independent, autonomous organisations with their own constitutions, and could appoint Joint-Chairmen or Vice-Chairmen if desired.

**Q12. Heather Diggle (Oundle DFAS)** was concerned about the Directory going online and sought assurance that a hard copy of the Directory would be produced for some time to come.

The Chairman confirmed that there is no plan to stop production of the hard copy.

At this point the Chairman brought the Questions session to a close.

## **10. Farewell and Welcome**

The Chairman addressed the meeting:

"Firstly the Trustee Board - you have already met the new Trustees but I must say a few words about Cindy Shaw-Stewart who is retiring today. Cindy has been a great contributor in her five years on the Board. Most notable has been her chairmanship of the Grants committee during a period, as you have seen, great growth in our Grants Programme. Also, her contribution as a member of the partnerships committee where her extensive knowledge and contacts in the arts world has been invaluable to NADFAS. I am delighted to say that we are not losing Cindy's expertise as she is remaining as a member of both those committees. As a one time NADFAS lecturer Cindy has always fiercely championed the standards of excellence, strongly resisting any move that might be seen as relaxing our selection criteria or dumbing down. She has been hugely supportive and a wonderful colleague and I have enjoyed working with her enormously, so thank you Cindy.

Today also marks the retirement of a number of members of the Advisory Council. Four of our Area Chairmen have now completed their time in office: June Robinson for East Surrey, Joy Manners, Greater London, Prue Smeeton, North East and Susan Zuill for Scotland and Northern Ireland. Thank you to you all. Your job is not always an easy one but the Trustees have very much welcomed and valued the advice that you have given to us and we have also enjoyed visiting your areas.

As you have heard, June has just been elected as a Trustee so she will be fairly busy and we will also be seeing great deal of Susan over the next year as she is at the helm of the wonderful team in Edinburgh organising next years AGM and the events around it.

A very warm welcome to the new members of the Advisory Council, our new Area Chairman: Lyn Slade for East Surrey, Margaret Barrie, Greater London, Anne Palmer, North East, and Elizabeth Black, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Also joining the Advisory Council is Sue O'Brien who becomes joint head of training with Sally Wykeham and will take over as Head of Training later this year.

Good luck in your new positions – I really hope that you enjoy it and have fun. I know that the Trustees are very much looking forward to working with you in the future".

## **11. Closing Remarks**

The Chairman addressed the meeting as follows:

That brings the formal proceedings of the meeting to an end. Before we go, I want to thank the team who have masterminded another successful AGM for us – in particular Judith Quiney and her assistant Jessica Barr, ably supported not only by the remaining staff at NADFAS house, but also by a great number of volunteers. They are too numerous to mention by name, but their contribution is nonetheless vital in looking after so many of us and making the day run smoothly – so, thank you all.

Now, apart from our Trustee Elections, there has of course been another election which may have an even more profound effect on NADFAS. We're in a new era in so many ways. It's not just the change in the political landscape. We seem to have been waiting a very long time for the fiscal

changes we all know must inevitably follow this election. Some of these are quite predictable – it is inconceivable that we will see the same level of government support for the arts. Others are less predictable: we do not know what the impact will be on us as individuals, and thus for our Societies. And on top of this a period of change will bring unintended consequences, so these are going to be uncertain times.

Despite this, I believe that NADFAS can look to the future with a great deal of confidence. I say this for two reasons. First, we have a healthy Association, both structurally and financially: the standard of our core activity – our lectures – remains outstandingly high and very good value for money. Second, the activities of our three volunteer arms in pursuing our charitable aims will be ever more important, and I am being told that they will be in even greater demand as government funding is squeezed. That isn't to say that we won't face challenges, but I do feel that the Trustees are in a good position to tackle them head on.

So - its time to send you away with the usual exhortation to come to the AGM next year - as you know it is in Edinburgh and I can only endorse Desmond's message this morning. Do make the effort to go. From all I've seen of the plans - it promises to be a memorable event.

## **12. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held at the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2011.