

Paper 59_4

TREASURER'S REPORT – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, DUBLIN 2015

Membership

The official membership of the Society at the end of 2014 was **573** of which 54 were (free subscription) honorary members and the remainder paid-up members. Over the last 2 years up to 31 December 2014 we have seen a decline in the official numbers for Society membership due to resignations (162) exceeding new members (148). Additionally, we have terminated membership due to death (1) or non-response (444). Resignations were anticipated following the increased subscription 3 years ago, but failure by many to respond to multiple requests to update their Standing Orders, or to cancel if they no longer want to remain a member of the Society, is considerable. Although no longer 'paid-up' members of the Society, many remain on our database because they continue to contribute to the Society via their Standing Orders to our NatWest account, which we maintain to receive income as 'donations' to the Society. For instance, 230 members were lapsed on 31 December 2014 due to non-payment (37) or failure to pay the full subscription (193). Whilst every effort is made to contact former members, given the time and associated costs involved we are no longer proactive after 18 months failure to make contact. The official figure of 573 is a long way short of the thousand or so cited in former years, but previous figures clearly included many non-responsive members. The official figure is therefore a more accurate representation of our Society in terms of membership participation and active engagement.

Finances

In 2014 the Society made a loss of £5,121. This was mainly due to a loss of £6,616 from the Oxford ASM. A principle of the Society is to keep ASM costs as low as possible, acknowledging that some venues are more expensive than others; some years generate a surplus whilst others operate at a loss, which balances at overall surplus long-term. Although a loss was incurred, this was within plan and ensured the event was, as is generally acknowledged, a huge success.

As stated last year, we moved all clerical and administrative support for the Society to HG3, incurring setup and handover costs across a couple of years, peaking in 2014. Reduction in clerical and administrative support costs in 2014 compared to 2013 is therefore due to a 'blip' in 2013 of higher than average costs for that one year; we return to a more stable 'norm' for 2014.

Committee expenses rose in 2014 in line with expectation due to several changes embarked upon in 2013 in expanded committee size and structure (i.e. designated roles and subsidiary working groups that feed into the main committee). This level of expenditure will stabilize going forward, with Society governance strengthened with greater proactive and hopefully more reach to its active members. We seek to off-set potentially increased committee costs by holding meetings by teleconference where possible.

Overall, the Society's finances remain healthy. At the end of August 2015, the Society's bank balance was **£98,585**, having loaned £8,500 to the University of Dublin to facilitate ASM preparations.

Succession planning

After less than one year as 'shadow' Treasurer Elect, Peter Tennant changed tack to seek election as the Honorary Secretary. Anna Pearce stood unopposed to replace Peter as my successor as Treasurer. I wish Peter, Anna, and the rest of the committee all the very best 2016 onwards. I thank the committee for their support and I especially thank Michaela Benzeval (Honorary Secretary) and Marian Churchill (Accounts Manager at HG3) for their invaluable help and support keeping me on track.

Investment for the future

There has been a focus on Early Career Researchers (ECR) in recent years, which has led to approximately 20% of our membership being ECR. We are also developing plans to invest in mid-career researchers and are well placed to do similar for our more 'veteran' members, with a specific desire to widen engagement with public health professionals and links with other societies. We are holding discussions with a few interested colleagues about how best to do this but welcome input from the broader membership. It would therefore be useful to discuss openly at the AGM the following questions:

- *What ideas do you have to help us grow our active membership?*
- *What would you like to see the Society do to invest in our established, 'veteran' membership?*

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