

## **National Hedgelaying Society**

### **Treasurer's Report for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020**

I am pleased to present the Examined Accounts for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. This examination was carried out by Chartered Accountants, Rogers.

Rogers confirm the accounts to be accurate and raise no issues of concern.

Being a non-company charity with a gross annual income of less than £250,000, the accounts are prepared on the Receipts and Payments basis, rather than the more complex Accruals Basis. Furthermore, because the gross annual income of the Society is less than £500,000, the accounts are required to be independently examined rather than audited. An audit is more in-depth and requires the underlying documents to be checked and verified. This is a more time-consuming exercise and hence would be more costly to the Society. However, I would have no concerns regarding these accounts being subject to audit.

Overall, the Society had a healthy balance of £165,691 to carry forward to 2021, which represents an increase of 6% over the previous year. However, whilst the Society finances need to be maintained in good shape, accumulating money is not the function nor aim of this Charity.

Inevitably, Covid-19 has impacted the activities of the Society. It resulted in reduced expenditure. Cancelled competitions and training events resulted in reduced payments under the Youth Award Scheme. A further significant saving was made against the usual overall nett deficit from the annual Championship. Income was also affected. The Wheler Foundation reviewed its support priorities because of the effect of Covid-19 on its other beneficiaries and there was a reduction in our membership and hence subscription receipts. I have commented on these aspects in greater detail below.

#### Membership

Referring to the Examined Accounts, it will be noted that the Membership Subscriptions are down by almost £800 on the previous year. This may be primarily because the Championship was not able to take place. We usually expect to enrol a few new members at the Championship, some members renew their membership at the event and I surmise that some members maintain their membership with the primary reason that they wish to attend or participate at the event. Although Individual Membership numbers decreased, Contractor Membership has risen marginally. There was also a small drop in the number of Affiliated Members, possibly because the Affiliated groups were unable to run their usual events and had no requirement for the insurance cover that affiliation provides.

Although, due to the hard work and persistence of our Membership Secretary, the situation relating to incorrect and duplicate subscription payments is improving, it has not been eliminated and I would ask all our members to check that their standing orders are 'in order' and also that when a subscription reminder is received that a check is made to see that the standing order, if that is in place, is for the correct amount, that only one standing order is set up and to confirm by email or text, to our Membership Secretary that this is the case.

The subscription rates currently remain as follows:

Individual	£20
Affiliated	£50
Contractor	£75

Members have asked about the possibility of them making their subscription payments by direct debit. Having investigated this, because of the additional on-line security implications, it is not considered to be feasible at this time although it remains under constant review.

### Championship

Due to Covid-19 our major event ultimately could not take place. However, some minor expenses were incurred, amounting to less than £300 in preparation for the event to proceed should that have been possible, plus the payment of £100 for 'Best Regrowth' prizes. The income of £100 was a late payment from the 2019 Championship.

### Skill Development

The receipts this year were £4000 from the Prince's Countryside Fund and £1500 from the Wheler Foundation.

The expenditure under this item includes £1225 under the Youth Awards Scheme, £600 to LANTRA for the establishment of the National Hedgelaying Society as an approved provider of training and qualifications in the craft of Hedgelaying, and the balance of £4034 being payments to P J Hart and L Clarkson on a consultancy basis, without whose work the establishment of the LANTRA Awards Scheme would not have been possible.

### Sundry

This item normally relates to the Patron's Event which, again due to the Covid pandemic, could not take place.

### Newsletter

Owing to the pandemic and the consequent lack of relevant news on which to report, there were again two rather than the usual three publications between January and December 2020. Further savings were also made in relation to printing and distribution costs which are affected by the number of pages and consequent weight of the publication, and the number of recipients.

### Secretarial Expenses

The further developments of the website, thanks to Richard Hooker our Webmaster, continue to enable more efficient management of membership administration. The greater use of emails and the text messaging facility, plus the greater use of payments by electronic transfer, all contributed to greater savings. Additionally, those meetings which have taken place have been 'virtual' meetings resulting in additional cost savings.

### Conclusion

Although the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted hugely on the training activities of this charity, the Officers of the Society have been very active in planning for the future. Huge credit should go to those involved in the establishment of the LANTRA awards scheme and obtaining grant funding from the Prince's Countryside Fund.

In addition to the above, we also have the recent announcement of the launch of the Rural Skills Hub which involves a partnership between the Dry Stone Walling Association and the National Hedgelaying Society, for which the two organisations together have been awarded funding of £99,700 from the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund. Although the DSWA are the lead partner and will handle the financial administration, the NHLS are a full half member to the scheme. This together with the LANTRA Awards scheme are both challenging and exciting developments for the future of the Society.