

Editorial - The Network is Changing - or is it?

Chris Clarke and Julian Candy

It's been clear for some time that David our Director is overworked. After all, the Network continues to grow steadily: membership in all categories now approaches 3000 in over 50 countries. Along with that activities have also increased. Not surprisingly, the office in Fife has become over-extended and somewhat isolated, even though much has been achieved by the staff in setting up more efficient systems and procedures. However, David has been finding it more and more difficult to escape from day to day distractions to focus on the things he is good at and which are the lifeblood of the Network.

Your Council therefore decided, after careful debate and consideration, and with a great deal of help and support from the Trustees, to appoint an Administrative Director, who will head up an office in the South of England. In the medium term, we hope that this accommodation will provide more than just desks and computers, and will become a place for members to meet, have a cup of coffee, consult books and journals, and relax.

However, the main purpose of making this appointment and setting up a separate office is to ensure that the Network is run in an efficient, cost effective and sensitive way. Subscriptions must be collected, members' practical queries answered, local groups sustained, conferences and meetings serviced, *Network* printed, fundraising supported, accounts for the AGM and the Charity Commissions prepared, and so on. All this and more can, Council believe, be better done from a location separate from David's home.

He of course will maintain a small office there, from which he will undertake all the programme development, planning conferences, inviting speakers, editing *Network*, and so on. In addition, he will have an expanding role in project development and fundraising, both for specific projects and for core funding.

In turn, these developments, together with the setting up of the Blaker Foundation, need a more flexible and accountable internal structure within the Network. Council can no longer oversee all the detailed implementation of what is becoming, through healthy growth, quite a complex organisation. A small Executive Subcommittee is therefore being established, of which David as Programme Director and Editor, and JOAN WAL.TON, as Director of the Blaker Foundation, will be members, together with two Council members and a Chairperson who will be a Vice- chair of Council. In addition to ensuring that Council strategy is carried out, this body will check that the programmes of the Blaker Foundation and the Network itself complement each other and do not clash.

Now to practicalities and personalities. We are happy to have appointed GRAHAM GORDON to the post of Administrative Director. In our view and his, he has the right combination of business experience and spiritual awareness to tackle this new and challenging post.

Until the next AGM in July 2000, when PETER FENWICK, our Chairman of Council, plans to step down, CHRIS CLARKE will act as 'senior' vice-chairman, and JULIAN CANDY as 'junior' vice-chairman and chair of the Executive Subcommittee. Its two other members will be PAUL FILMORE and ANNE MILLER. At the AGM elections will take place for these posts and for a number of other positions, some arising from our restructuring. All the details will be laid out in good time, and can be debated at the AGM itself.

We are not as far forward in finding the ideal premises for our office and ultimately members meeting place. Temporarily therefore, we are accepting the generous offer of our Founder and President, and placing the office in George Blaker's house, from where indeed the Network began. This though is rather isolated, and we cannot continue there for long. Perhaps a Member can help? Many of you have already made useful suggestions for various parts of the country, but we would now like to hear from anyone who knows of potentially suitable premises within suitable travelling distance of Guildford, where Graham lives. We need a minimum of 300 square feet, and preferably more, and ideally with access to other small meeting rooms. We cannot afford full commercial rates. If you can help, please contact any member of Council. Graham Gordon is taking up his post before the New Year, and the office will move in early January. During January in particular, please be patient if service to members are not as prompt and responsive as you and we might wish. In a very few weeks we expect they will be better than ever!

Finally, in all this there is no intention to change the nature of the Network or of its activities and aspirations. It will remain an informal grouping of intelligent and open-minded people, interested and concerned about issues at the frontiers of knowledge, intuition and experience, both those of individuals and of society. However, its growth, itself no doubt reflecting the spirit of the age, demands an evolutionary leap in the way we organise ourselves, and that is what this is about. There are some very exciting projects in the offing, and we have to make ourselves fit to rise to the challenge they represent.

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