



Dear Members,

Last October, as I began my National Chairmanship with a new Board, much promise was anticipated. Unfortunately, we had a lot to overcome. Many of you will be aware that the Diamond Anniversary Event incurred a considerable financial loss which was a great disappointment to our members. As a member myself, I am extremely sad, too, and want to say how sorry I am that it happened. We have extensively investigated the circumstances and obtained greater insight into running such large events. It was clear that many factors contributed to the loss. The whole Diamond Event was over-ambitious especially when little sponsorship was forthcoming. The competition work, judging, talks, educational workshops, photography and exhibition pieces, of course, were outstanding as they always are at NAFAS competitive events. It was hard to keep track of expenditure. NAFAS was hacked three times in February 2019 and our Company Secretary had officially retired the previous November, though he kindly tried to assist NAFAS for some months afterwards. Unfortunately, Board members saw few detailed updates of finances during the run up to the Show and Dinner and sometimes decisions were not minuted. The high cost of coming to London resulted in poor footfall. Measures have now been put in place to stop losses like that ever happening again. These have been reported to the Charities Commission who have been satisfied with them.

From March 2020, the storm of the Coronavirus pandemic has raged, bringing further challenges to the Association. Over the past few months, NAFAS has made many, much needed changes for the better including ways of working through establishing new Board specialist Teams, cutting costs and proposed revisions of the Articles of Association. We have started to plan and prepare new publications, create a new and exciting website and set in place Virtual Meetings with the Board, Committees, Area Chairmen and staff.

In June and shortly after, I was so very sad to say goodbye to lovely friends and colleagues who had brought such hope to NAFAS. We received kind messages after these resignations at such a difficult time in our NAFAS history. I would like to thank them for all they have done for NAFAS and wish them well in whatever they now undertake.

After having the huge losses from the Diamond Events, we once again find ourselves in financial difficulty with a serious cashflow problem and no reserves for 2020/21 which is extremely worrying. A way forward has been discussed at length by the Board, National President and our CEO at regular Virtual Meetings.

We have recently applied for a £150,000 Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan from NatWest Bank to help the Association through to the end of next year. Should it be agreed, we can choose how much of the loan we take up, but re-payments will be needed over time and these must be manageable. If this is not approved, we shall have to look elsewhere but application time is short.

The Flower Arranger magazine has always contributed a considerable financial sum to the Association's income. Due to Government closure of non-essential shops during the pandemic, *The Flower Arranger* could not be sold to the public. Sales will therefore be down considerably, along with income to NAFAS. As Clubs have not met during lockdown, some members have now subscribed directly to ensure that they are guaranteed to receive their magazines and this may be the preferred method of renewal for members in the coming months. However, Club Subscriptions are hugely discounted - £12.80 rather than £22 for an Individual Subscriber. I would like to encourage you all to subscribe to our inspirational and informative journal. If you haven't renewed your subscription then you should contact your Club Chairman or your Club Flower Arranger Officer to subscribe.

After extensive consultation within Areas, some have been generous by considering providing a loan to support the National Association after this was suggested by a few Area Chairmen at a Virtual National Advisory Council Meeting. The preferred option is to provide Affiliation Fees and some are also able to pay these early for which we are especially grateful. Personally, I am not very happy with going 'cap in hand' for this money but options are few.

You will know that our main source of income is the Affiliation Fee paid annually by each member of the Association, collected by your Club within the Club's annual subscription. Many Clubs have been unable to collect subscriptions this year due to lockdown and this situation could create further financial problems next year as no one knows how many members will be recruited. We must, as members, save our Clubs and Areas to be able to function through our Affiliation Fees. Please do ensure that your Club affiliates to your Area so that the future of NAFAS is ensured. Today, in the pandemic, wellbeing has been uppermost and creating with flowers and foliage makes us feel better inside. It gives a warm feeling of belonging, combatting loneliness especially in stressful and unhappy times. We need each other - our passion will surely see us through.

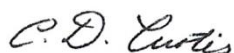
We have decided to bring forward the Feasibility Study destined for review in 2022. We need to be ready for all eventualities. NAFAS is in a better state than many Charities. We are fortunate to have Osborne House, our Grade II listed Georgian Headquarters, as an asset. It seems, however, that our asset may have to be realised. There are all sorts of options for the future – selling, renting, leasing or selling and leasing back. Funding from the sale could be used to obtain rented office space or relocation to smaller premises. As a consequence we could, with careful management, be in an improved situation to move forward as an Association. We have two strands of the Feasibility Study working now: the first one regarding existing and future requirements of the Association and the second, a preliminary consultation with a professional Property Company to establish our options on Osborne House. We have received a free report from the Property Company discussing our options. Further detailed and careful discussions, based on this report, will need to take place. Feedback from members is important so let us know what you think via your Area Chairmen.

Can I kindly ask you to, if you haven't already done so, to pay your Affiliation Fees to keep your Club affiliated to NAFAS and to your Area. Your fees will enable the Association to continue for the coming year.

Coronavirus is not going away. We must learn to deal with it until a vaccine is introduced. That could take time. There is an Unlock Guidance document available from NAFAS now to help you and your Club with the kind of decisions you need to make as things start up once again in our flowery world. Please don't let NAFAS disappear. It is just too good an Association to lose. New volunteers will be in post shortly including a Vice-Chairman and the Board will resume its important role with fresh enthusiasm.

With your support we can make a brighter future together and spread our passion to 'Bring People and Flowers Together'.

Thank you.



Dr. Christina Curtis (NAFAS National Chairman)

1 AUGUST 2020