

SOMERSET ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Once again SANHS staff and volunteers have met the sizable challenge of running the society. The office is always a hive of activity with volunteers undertaking a series of vital tasks such as managing the membership database, discussing Proceedings, working on new publications, producing newsletters as well as supporting the excellent programme of events. I would like to offer my considerable thanks to everyone for making the time and effort in making SANHS a success. Part of this success is due to professional skills and enthusiasm of the Office Manager, since joining us just over a year, Louisa's dedicated work has ensured the smooth running of the Society.

This past year has been particularly challenging period for SANHS. As you will have seen from the annual report we have undertaken a considerable amount of work in securing the future of the SANHS estate, especially the work on the Norman Gardens. My hope that the excellent work by Martin Davidson and many others will mean that for the first time in many years SANHS estate will be better managed and safer for all to enjoy. However, there are still considerable challenges ahead in carrying out this work; as yet we have not fully identified funding for this project.

The 2016 Business Plan rightfully acknowledges the importance of improving our communications with members and the public. Therefore, we established a website working party to focus on replacing and upgrading our website. This working group have risen to the challenge of identifying SANHS business needs of the project. The group are currently seeking funding opportunities to enable us to proceed with this important work of upgrading the website. I am hopeful of completing the work by the end of this year 2017.

Having met the challenges in 2016, I believe that our biggest challenge is yet to come. Our task is to ensure the continuing success of the organisation. The Board is clear that SANHS must attract more

skilled people on the Board of Trustees and interest groups, if we fail to attract more members to this important role I have serious concerns for the future of the charity.

The 2016 events programme included many popular talks and activities organised by the four subject committees, as well as the introduction of the Exploring SANHS Collections (ESC) workshops and talks. There are plans to continue sharing the SANHS collections with the SANHS membership and the public so look out for more ESC workshops and talks in the autumn programme. We also plan to attend several events during this summer, to highlight the work of SANHS across the county. In the autumn, we will be having a celebration to mark the publication of the book Taunton Castle by Chris Webster which is very much a SANHS/SWHT collaboration. Please read the e-bulletin to keep up with all these developments and those of our Associated Societies. We will, of course, be holding an annual Associated Societies Day later this year. Arrangements are in hand and we hope the next e-bulletin will have all the details.

We are planning another General Meeting in December, venue to be decided, to meet our members and to talk about our future regarding becoming a Community Interest Organisation (CIO). This will be an essential part of ensuring the future of SANHS. Between now and then, we will be taking legal advice on the pros, cons and alternative models of incorporation so that we can put a fully informed proposal to the Board and then to you, our members. An important part of this meeting will also be to meet more of our members and find out what you would also like to see SANHS doing and providing for our membership.

Once again, many thanks to all our volunteers, committees and Louisa Gillett for all their hard work this year. Please help us to make 2017 just as productive, varied and enjoyable!

Stephen Parker, Chair of SANHS, 2017