**DURHAM UNIVERSITY RETIRED STAFF ASSOCIATION**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**20 JUNE 2018**

**Present:** The Chairman of DURSA, Dr A Heesom, in the chair, Professor J Anstee, Professor D Clark, Prof I Evans, Dr M Evans, Miss M McCollum, Dr M Morant, Dr K Orford, Professsor P Rhodes, Dr E Ross, Dr I Stewart, Dr B Thomas, Professor A Townsend, Dr J Townsend, Dr J Tudor, Professor A Unsworth.

In addition to the members of DURSA there were present as observers Mrs A Anstee, Mrs J Heesom, Dr R Morant, Mrs P Stewart, Mrs J Unsworth, Mr D Williams.

**Minutes**

**38 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Bill Bryson, who sent his good wishes to all, and Mrs M Allison, Dr R Banks, Dr D Barry, Dr J Charters, Professor R Cramp, Mr C Doloughan, Mrs K Fall, Dr B Gower, Miss L Groves, Professor P Harvey, Miss J Kenworthy, Dr M Kilner, Dr R Minney, Mr B Najak, Mr F Pritchard, Dr W Telford, Dr D Whan.

**39 Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 7 June 2017 were approved.

**40 Matters arising from the Minutes**

Minute 34. Good Causes.

**Reported:** that owing to DURSA’s having to pay VAT on all transactions conducted by DARO it has not been possible to build up a reserve fund which could be used to support good causes. The Chairman noted that it was still the intention support good causes and it is the practice to make a small surcharge on the cost of events for this purpose, but at present it is beyond the Association’s capacity to support good causes financially.

**41 Annual Report**

1. **Received: the following Annual Report**

**1. Acknowledgement**The Committee again wishes to record its gratitude for all the help received from the staff of DARO and in particular from Carolyn Moralee for handling the Association’s records and bookings and for distributing news and circulars to members.  
  
 **2. The Committee**   
The composition of the Committee has been as elected at the Annual General Meeting in 2017. It has continued to meet regularly and believes that a successful pattern of activities has been established.

**3. Membership**The current number of members is 459 (412 contactable by email).

The Committee established an **Honorary Membership** category for distinguished people who have a special connection with the University, such as former Chancellors. Honorary Membership is by invitation, and we are delighted to record that Bill Bryson accepted the invitation to become our first Honorary Member.

**4. Accounts**The accounts seem to show a satisfactory picture.  
  
 **5. Finances**The Committee has given much attention to concerns over the Association’s financial arrangements, in particular the persistent problem of seriously inadequate financial reporting by the University which makes it difficult to present proper accounts, and our being charged VAT on all transactions that go through DARO. The Committee has sought clarification and meetings with the University’s most senior officers but with little or no success, and it has explored possible ways of dealing with the difficulty such as setting up our own database and booking system. The Committee decided that this complex and unresolved matter should be brought to the AGM for discussion.

**6. Events During the Year**  
A number of events have been arranged during the year which those attending have found interesting and informative. All the hosts have been very welcoming and have gone to a great deal of trouble on DURSA’s behalf. We are most grateful to them.

Details of attendance are as follows, the number of members and guests is shown in brackets:

15 November Visit to the Physics telescope. (24)

12 December Pre-Christmas Reception, at which Bill and Andrena Telford again gave us a reading, this time from *The Pickwick Papers*, which was much appreciated. (28)

24 January Visit to the Department of Anthropology. (21)

7 February Arts Faculty guided tour of Ushaw College. (28)

7 March Presentation by Estates and Buildings. (15)

21 March Annual Dinner at Le Nouveau Restaurant, New College, to which we welcomed Owen Adams, PVC for Colleges and Student Experience. (30)

17 April Visit to the National Biologics Centre at Darlington. (23)

24 May Visit to Hotel Indigo (14, the maximum permitted)

6 June Visit to Locomotion, The National Railway Museum at Shildon. (20+ expected)

20 June AGM and Reception.

We have also held monthly Drop-Ins in the Botanic Garden Café. Attendance has varied but is often in the range 8-15.  
  
 **7. Events for 2018-19**

A tour of the Nissan plant at Sunderland has been booked.

Other events being arranged include visits to:

The Psychology Department

The Chemistry Department

The Hitachi Plant at Newton Aycliffe

The History Department

A Waste Recycling Plant

An Archaeology Department dig at Bishop Auckland

Houghall College.

We are also considering visits to:

The Roman Fort at Binchester.

The Cathedral Library and/or the Stone Mason’s Yard. The cost of the visit might be prohibitive (e.g. Room Hire £50, Curatorial talk £3pp, Cathedral Library visit £5pp, Works yard visit £5pp, and further charges for any tea/coffee etc.)

In addition we intend to arrange the usual Pre-Christmas Reception and the Annual Dinner, and we will continue to run the monthly Drop-Ins.

1. In presenting the Report the Chairman emphasised the Association’s gratitude to DARO staff and in particular to Carolynn Moralee.

The Chairman also noted the impending departure of David Williams, [Head Alumni and Supporter Engagement](https://www.dunelm.org.uk/contact/meettheteam/davidwilliams). He wished Mr Williams well in his new career post and paid a special tribute to him for all his much-valued support and interest in DURSA.

Bill Bryson’s acceptance of the invitation to become an Honorary Member was highlighted. The general success of the 2017-18 programme of events was noted and the plans for 2018-19 were presented.

1. The 2018-19 programme

In discussion it was agreed that there was likely to be sufficient interest in the Nissan visit booked for October to warrant booking a further 15 places. There was also agreement that the Annual Dinner should again be booked at New College. Other planned visits met with approval.

**42 Accounts**

1. **Received:** the Association’s accounts for the period 1st August 2017 to 1st June 2018
2. **Noted:** The difficulty in getting accurate and up-to-date information from the University was a continuing concern. The figures presented were the best estimates from the information that it was possible to obtain.

The Chairman drew attention to the mistaken view expressed by the University Secretary that it was never the intention that the University should hold the DURSA account. She appears not to have regard for the Memorandum of Understanding which says “The Treasurer of the University will hold the DURSA bank account”.

1. **Reported:** by David Willams that DARO was willing to make two offers.
2. He will ask his DARO colleagues if the DURSA Cost Centre can be changed to a Restricted Fund so allowing DURSA to roll over surpluses from year to year and hopefully reconcile the accounts more easily.
3. DARO will make a one-off payment to the DURSA Cost Centre, reimbursing the estimated funds that have been lost to the VAT payments of which DURSA was unaware (approximately £400, to be agreed). DURSA will build in the cost of VAT into its ticket price in the future.
4. **Resolved:** that, having thanked DARO for this most welcome gesture, these offers should be gratefully accepted and implemented as soon as possible.

**43 The Future Organisation of DURSA**

1. **Received: the following document**

**The Future Organisation of DURSA**

DURSA exists because its members have all worked for the University of Durham. Its aim, as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which established the Association, is “to provide a way for all retired members of staff to remain part of the wider University community.” The fact that that Memorandum was approved by the University Council, and that alterations have to be approved by the University Council, binds us closely to the University.

Recent events have, however, raised doubts about that relationship. Notably, in October of this year, it was drawn to the Committee’s attention that the University had been and would continue to (on behalf of HMRC) charge Value Added Tax on every transaction conducted by DARO on behalf of DURSA, on the ground that the University was supplying us with a taxable ‘service.’ Attempts to persuade the University to reconsider met with strong resistance (on the understandable ground that the University did not wish to damage its relationship with HMRC).

The net effect of this has been that, far from building up a surplus for ‘good causes’, as was reported to the last AGM, the Association’s finances are severely depleted from the sum that the Committee then envisaged (see the Treasurer’s report).

Thus while the DURSA Committee (and we assume the whole membership) value the relationship with the University, we have been forced to consider alternative arrangements.

1) Financial arrangements.

1. Members will be aware that since its formation, DURSA’s money has been handled through DARO. This was agreed in the MoU paragraph 3.
2. Members will also be aware that we have, unhappily, never been able to present proper accounts to each AGM, as successive Committees would have wished. The present Treasurer (a former member of the University Finance Department) has sought in vain to get up-to-date accurate figures, but DARO’s accounting system does not apparently make this possible.
3. In January this year, the University Secretary wrote to DURSA’s Chairman stating that “it was not the intention when DURSA was set up” that it should operate from “a University controlled bank account” [this notwithstanding clause 3 of the MoU which explicitly states “The Treasurer of the University will hold the DURSA bank account”], and concluded “As a separate organisation [*sic*], DURSA should have a bank account separate to the University.” Attempts to seek clarification from the Secretary have failed to produce a reply.
4. The Committee have therefore provisionally opened an account at Barclays, which needs to be approved by the AGM
5. There are several drawbacks to such an arrangement:
6. It accepts the University Secretary’s false premise about the original intentions as expressed in the MoU
7. It will cast additional responsibilities on the Association’s own Treasurer
8. It will need the Committee to establish appropriate payment arrangements for events etc. which hopefully are at least as user-friendly as present arrangements (both for those paying and for those receiving such payments)
9. On the positive side
10. It will enable the Treasurer to present accurate accounts to future AGMs
11. It will (subject to certain other changes mentioned below) enable us to stop paying VAT
12. Over time, it will thus enable us to build up a ‘good causes fund’ which under present arrangements has proved impossible.

2) Data arrangements

1. The MoU (clause 1) states that “a database of DURSA members will be maintained by the Alumni Relations team” and DARO have used this to facilitate booking, and to facilitate communications with members.
2. The University Secretary stated in January that (with the coming of new Data Protection legislation effective in May) DURSA would have to enter into a Data Sharing Agreement with the University “regarding the sharing of University data with a third party organisation”
3. Attempts to point out to the University Secretary that the University controlled *our* data, and that we held *no* University data, have so far met with no reply.
4. Members have recently experienced considerable difficulties in booking for events on-line; and the on-line booking arrangements have other drawbacks (*e.g*. identifying guests) as well.
5. The Committee have therefore explored the possibility of adopting alternative database arrangements, specifically adopting the soft-ware currently used by some College SCR’s for keeping in touch with their members, booking social events, etc. The DURSA database would be entirely independent of DARO.
6. Again, there are drawbacks to such a proposal
7. So far, the Committee have been unable to pin down copyright ownership of the relevant software;
8. We would need IT expertise in establishing and maintaining such a system; that currently exists within the Committee, but for long-term security we clearly need more than one person capable of running the system now and in the future;
9. Given the apparent attitude towards DURSA (as a “separate organisation”) we have no guarantee that the University would allow such a system to run on the University’s server.
10. As mentioned above, we need to be sure that people booking for chargeable events actually pay; whereas College payments in the model the Committee has looked at are settled by end-of-term battels bills, DURSA needs payment by event, and we have at present no mechanism to ensure this.
11. We would need to negotiate with the University on the arrangements for inviting retiring members of staff to join DURSA, claim privileges, and be entered on the DURSA database.

g) On the positive side

i) We would avoid paying VAT for ‘services’ provided by DARO

ii) We would control our own database, and (notwithstanding the University Secretary’s claims) avoid Data overlap with the University.

iii) The Committee are assured that booking for events will be simple andstraightforward, and that *e.g*. guests can be easily identified on the proposed system.

The Committee needs decisions as to whether we adopt a separate bank account from that run by the University; whether we adopt a separate data base; or whether we continue with the status quo and continue to seek improved accounting and on-line booking systems. It is only fair to point out that the DURSA Committee is divided on the future path, and therefore needs clear guidance from the membership.

Alan Heesom (Chair)

Barry Thomas (Secretary)

10th May 2018

1. **Reported:** by the Chairman, that:

The Association has explored ways of avoiding paying VAT on transactions going through DARO, and had set up its own bank account in case that were to be a way forward.

Following a meeting with the VC in October 2017 the Chairman prepared, at the VC’s request, a memo outlining DURSA’s concerns especially relating to the payment of VAT. The memo was passed to the COO but DURSA received no acknowledgement of its receipt nor any response. In January the University Secretary emailed saying it was never the University’s intention to hold the DURSA bank account and asserting that DURSA held the data on membership and would need to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation by 25 May 2018. The Chairman replied pointing out that both views were mistaken and he requested a meeting. There was no acknowledgement or reply. The Chairman followed this up but still received no response. He then wrote to the VC on 4 June noting the lack of responses from Senior Officers and asking directly for the VC’s view on the future of DURSA.

The DURSA Committee resolved that if a reply from the VC were not received by Monday 18 June letters should be sent to the VC, the COO, the University Secretary and the Chairman of Council.

No reply has been received from the VC.

1. **Resolved:** that the DURSA Chairman should contact the Chairman of Council, Robert Gillespie, by telephone for an informal off-the-record talk to seek advice on how DURSA should proceed in the circumstances. This was thought to be the best first step rather than formal letters.
2. **Reported:** by David Williams that he was willing to contact his senior colleagues, VC/COO/Secretary, to restate DURSA’s special and DARO-supported position with regard to running a University account (Cost Centre), a database, and having University email and library access.

It was also reported that the University Secretary was conducting a review of so-called ‘arms-length’ organisations in the University, including DURSA, but it was not known when the review would be completed.

1. **Resolved:** that David Williams’ offer to contact senior officers, which was greatly appreciated, should be accepted.
2. In the light of David Williams’ offer, the Committee would take no immediate action on these matters, pending the outcome of Mr Williams' intervention with the Senior Officers of the University.

**44 Membership of the Committee**

1. **Reported:** that the retiring members of the Commttee, all eligible to stand again, were Mrs M Allison, Mrs K Fall, and Dr A Heesom**.**
2. **Resolved:**  that, in the absence of other nominations, Mrs M Allison, Mrs K Fall, and Dr A Heesom, who had been duly proposed and seconded, be declared elected to serve for three years from 1 July 2018.

*NOTE: The composition of the Committee for 2018-19 is therefore as follows:*

*Elected until 30 June 2019*

*Prof. J.H.Anstee*

*Dr K.J.Orford*

*Miss M.S.McCollum*

*Elected until 30 June 2020*

*Mr T.C.Doloughan*

*Mr F.W.Pritchard*

*Dr R.B.Thomas (Secretary)*

*Elected until 30 June 2021*

*Mrs M. Allison*

*Mrs K. Fall*

*Dr A.J.Heesom (Chairman)*

**45 Appointment of Treasurer**

1. **Reported:**  that the DURSA Treasurer, Mrs K Fall, who is very experienced having previously been employed in the Finance Office and having managed the accounts of various organisations, was sufficiently disturbed by the University’s inadequate financial reporting arrangements and the consequent impossibility of drawing up accurate accounts that she would resign if this situation were to persist.
2. **Resolved:** that, in light of the new arrangements to establish a Restricted Funds Account in DARO, Mrs Fall be asked to accept the nomination as Treasurer, and if she accepts she be deemed elected.

**46 AOB** There was no other business.

21.6.18