

Educational
Centres
Association



Annual Report 2006 — 2007



Intergenerational Learning - ECA President Emeritus, Brian Groombridge with Enni
Teddy Bear Project, Vammala Finland, February 2007

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Educational
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Educational Centres Association

President Emeritus
Vice President

Prof. Brian Groombridge
Prof. Brian Johnson FRS, FRSE

National Executive Committee

President
Chairman
Vice Chairman

Vacant
Bernard Godding *
Vacant
Alan Skinner MBE (to December 06)
Chris Minter * (from October 06)
Naomi Godding *

Hon Secretary
Treasurer

Regional Executive Members:
Eastern

Hazel Dunn (to June 06)
Graham Eldridge * (from June 06)

East Midlands

Sue Taplin (to June 06)
Diane Branigan (from June 06)

North West

Walt Crowson *

South East

Chris Minter (to October 06)

West Midlands

Paul Olver *

South Wales

Vaughan Williams (to August 06)

Vacancies exist for remaining Regional Members & Wales

Co-opted

Jill Ward (to April 07)
Safia Mohamud (from February 07)

Staff

Administration & PA

Karen Read
Kate Hodges

European Projects Officer
Every Action Counts Assistant

Judith Robinson
Susie White (from March 07)

Examiner of Accounts

Sexty & Co, Norwich

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Registered Charity No. 313302

Current Trustees *

Structure, Governance and Management

The Charity was founded in 1920 as the Educational Settlements Association. It is a membership body governed by a written Constitution, last amended in 2006, which prescribes the form of the National Executive Committee (NEC) whose members have Trustee status. The NEC met five times during the year. The officers of the Charity are elected at periodic intervals by open meeting, based on nominations from amongst all registered members.

Following advice from the Charity Commission, the mandatory provisions for establishing Regional Committees were dispensed with at the last AGM. The NEC is in the process of instituting new more flexible arrangements. Regional members of the NEC have previously been elected at a local meeting but will hence forward be elected by postal ballot.

Notice of nominations and details of elections are circulated in line with the Constitution. Where specific expertise or experience is sought this is identified in the supporting documents and may result in targeted recruitment to co-opted positions.

Policy statements on Equal Opportunities and Sustainability have been agreed and are periodically reviewed. A "Lone Worker" policy has been adopted in recognition of new staff working practices.

The work of the charity is undertaken by volunteers from the NEC and regional contacts, supported by part-time administrative staff. In addition a freelance Projects Officer works on behalf of the Association under contract to the lead partner, as part of a team delivering training developed within our joint Grundtvig project for facilitators of European citizenship education. An additional worker was appointed on a short term contract to launch our sustainability activities under "Every Action Counts" a DEFRA funded project.

A website with a designation [.ac.uk](http://ac.uk) is hosted by internet service provider Paston Chase and managed through the national office.

The Association is a member of the European Association for the Education of Adults, EAEA and the Community Sector Coalition, CSC, as well as reciprocal membership with 'engage' and the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)

Objectives and Activities 2006/07

The Association exists to promote the education of adults.

In particular it seeks to encourage the development of **centres of adult learning** 'Educational Centres' through: -

1. enabling them to work in partnership
2. promoting active involvement of students and staff in their management
3. advocating that suitably equipped and sustainably managed buildings are provided
4. encouraging the exchange of information & providing training and consultation events for the sector
5. organising conferences and publishing material about and in support of their work
6. undertaking educational experiments
7. pursuing research into the education of adults

In the period in question this has been achieved through: -

1. Taking responsibility for coordinating the work of a number of agencies in the West Midlands and their continuing collaboration with colleagues in Finland, Italy & Slovenia.

Contributing to the joint communiqué sent to the then Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding the continuing case for non-formal, non-accredited adult learning opportunities to meet the needs of socially vulnerable groups.

Attending a meeting at Ruskin College with Trades Union Representatives and other leading sector officers, in support of a campaign for adult education.

Working with representatives of six other European agencies concerned with participative approaches in adult education.

Providing support to the umbrella National Learning Partnership Network during its last months as a viable body.

2. Continuing to engage the Lifelong Learning Minister and officials at DfES on the issue of involving adult learners in the governance of educational provision in which they are taking part.

Stressing to Lifelong Learning UK the importance of adult education tutor training, both in enabling teaching staff to contribute to the setting of institutional agendas and also their critical role in acting as the bridge between the institution and its learners.

Playing a significant role in the final meeting of the TEACH project in Finland which ran in parallel to a training event where again UK delegates participated. Subsequent courses held elsewhere in Europe have been taught by our tutor and we continue to recruit participants from all parts of Great Britain.

3. Identifying good practice in sustainable management of learning environments while continuing to note the progressive loss of facilities for locally based, accessible opportunities for adult learning supported by the LSC. This contrasts with the further development of such opportunities by bodies like museums and galleries.

4. Contributing to the work of Lifelong Learning UK through participation in the Community Development Learning working group.

Playing an active role in the Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC) group under the auspices of the Home Office, later DCLG, helping to devise the 'Take Part' learning framework which was launched by Ministers during the year.

Providing further training for tutors in European citizenship education through TEACH.

5. Organising conferences, at Harlow where in April we had the good fortune to hear from the local MP, Lifelong Learning Minister Bill Rammell and in June when the Victoria & Albert Museum was the venue for a regional conference: 'Valuing the Arts & Crafts of Adult Learning'.

We continue to publish a lively and informative newsletter and recognise with warm appreciation the role of Alan Skinner, our Editor until late in the year, who transformed the publication and in doing so set extremely high standards for future editions.

6. A period of intense activity leading to the satisfactory transfer of the Teddy Bear Grundtvig Project to the ECA's overall leadership & management for its third year. Our collaboration with colleagues in schools and settings for older people in the West Midlands was assisted greatly by the WRVS in Herefordshire. At the European level our partners from Finland and Italy were joined by the Slovenian Institute as final year partners.

7. The successful use of web-based 'tiki' which was established for a closed user group in association with the TEACH project. We commissioned a similar resource for the Teddy Bear Project; in addition the transition was smoothed by the use of voice over internet (Skype) both to maintain contacts within that partnership and to develop a further project proposal for submission to the European Commission.

Achievements and Performance

Developing Citizenship Education for Adults

Some of the successes in the year related to our continuing work concerning citizenship education where, building on the first TEACH pilot course hosted by us at the Wedgwood Memorial College, we contributed to training of staff from the wider areas of Europe.

This work was supported by the innovative use of ICT resources and involved a tutorial team from all of the partner agencies including tutors from; Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary and Italy as well as ourselves. Judith Robinson, one of the graduates from the pilot course, progressed to being a mainstay of subsequent course teams. She and the Chairman took part in the course and final meeting of the project team held at Västra Nylands folkhögskola (folk high school) in Karjaa, Finland at the time of the Eurovision Song Contest. The Finnish win was greeted by fireworks in the local village and with great enthusiasm by the course participants, indicating the solidarity that had built up with our hosts during the course.

Judith subsequently addressed a conference in Porto, Portugal concerning the successful outcomes and visited Brussels to contribute to the European Platform on Lifelong Learning. She continues to play a major role in courses managed by the folk high school.

The relationship between TEACH and the Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC) project sponsored by the Home Office developed during the year and we contributed to the 'Take Part' learning framework which resulted. Attendance at the twin Ministerial launches of the framework resulted in our range of contacts with the relevant agencies being extended.



At the invitation of the European Association for the Education of Adults the Chairman and Chris Minter, accompanied by ALAC and TEACH co-workers, travelled to Brussels by Eurostar for a reception in the European Parliament hosted by Ms. Helga Trüpel, Vice-chair of the Committee on Education and Culture.

The Chairman's visit coincided with a meeting of the 'Diversity Within Unity' Project, coordinated by

The George Washington University, the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and Baden-Württemberg's Representation to the EU. The personal invitation provided an opportunity to meet both British MP David Willetts and the Parliamentary Secretary of State at the Federal Ministry of the Interior of Germany, Dr. Peter Altmaier.

Subsequently Vice Chairman Alan Skinner attended an event on 'Higher Education and Civic Engagement' then, under his editorship, the Summer Edition of the Newsletter was dedicated to citizenship education.

Learner Participation

The contribution of the Minister, Bill Rammell at our Harlow meeting was highly significant in terms of the Association's long term objectives. Mr Rammell stressed that he saw learner participation as a bench-mark for the quality of provision in post-school education.

At the invitation of the Minister we subsequently met officials from his department concerned with 'Personalisation' in Further Education, to share perspectives from the Association's long involvement with learner participation in educational

courses and programmes. This linked with an event held by DEMOS to which we were invited through the agency of the Finnish Institute, the theme of which was 'Social Innovation and Well Being'

Increasing Personal Competencies

We were invited to a House of Commons reception by the Public Legal Education and Support (PLEAS) Task Force which was set up in January 2006 to develop proposals for promoting and improving public legal education. The Task Force was supported by the Department for Constitutional Affairs – now the Ministry of Justice. This provided an opportunity to discuss issues relating to structured teaching of a subject which is most often of relevance at times of personal stress.

Two of the officers went to the Buckfast Conference in South Devon for an interactive event on 'Reaching the Hard to Reach' which was very ably staged by Exeter CVS. ECA Member Alan Gorman who works with the CVS is especially interested in financial literacy amongst older people.

An Aging Population & Intergenerational Learning

Our involvement with the Teddy Bear Project, which commenced through Paul Olver's service with the Herefordshire authority, led to a request that we manage the third year as lead partner for this very successful Grundtvig activity. We secured the funds from the British Council to take the work through its final dissemination year and at the same time negotiated with DfES through NIACE for the administrative and professional costs of this activity to be supported out of the Annual Grant.

Teddy Bear operates in the West Midlands where a number of primary schools and one comprehensive are involved, as are a range of agencies used by senior citizens.

Blurton High School, Stoke-on-Trent

A Teddy Bear Project Partner

Abstract from OFSTED Inspection Report, June 2006

Personal development and well-being

Good curriculum provision in and out of lessons ... has helped pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. The personal, social and health education and citizenship programmes contribute effectively to the pupils' development... The school's business and community links, which include charity work and organising events for senior citizens, are strong and also have a positive impact on pupils' development of skills for their future economic well-being.

The WRVS in Hereford has been a major player in work supported by the Learning & Skills Council as have a number of other agencies both in the rural areas and the city of Stoke-on-Trent. The project operates on the basis of reminiscence sessions amongst older people whose recollections then become source material for local 20th Century history in schools; our partners are in Finland, Italy and Slovenia. A visit which included the Chairman and National Treasurer took place initially to Italy in May under the auspices of Herefordshire Council. Before the third year of funding was confirmed Paul Olver and the Chairman went again in October accompanied by primary head teacher Christine Potts and librarian Kath Reynolds. In both instances they travelled to see schools and groups of older people in different alpine communities.

Subsequently the hosts were Finland where a group this time including Jill Ward, Kate Hodges and Brian Groombridge had a memorable night-time forest walk in deep February snow and took part as learners in an intergenerational crafts workshop, as well as meeting the whole of the senior officer team of the City of Vammalla. The visit finished with an intensive meeting in central Helsinki at which the basis of a future Grundtvig 1 partnership was arrived at with Kate acting as a very able scribe.



A significant aspect of these visits was the quality of the relationships between the European partners; plus the sense that despite language and geographical differences there is ready comparability between the project experiences in the different communities. There was clear evidence that young and old do work extremely well together, share their enthusiasms and value friendships that reach across the decades. With an aging population in Europe these are messages that it is vital we listen to.

The impact of the project has been such that it was selected as the sole representative of UK Grundtvig Projects at an event in Birmingham that marked the transition of programme management from British Council to ECOTEC. A special leaflet was produced by Kate Hodges in the national office to support this event. The Chairman and one of the Hereford headteachers attended when Paul Olver made a well received presentation which generated considerable interest.

This was followed in mid-January by a reception in the Map Room in the Foreign Office. Here Paul and WRVS Teddy Bear tutor Bob Short, also an ECA Member, were able to provide further details of the work of partners to Ministers Geoff Hoon (Europe) and Bill Rammell (Lifelong Learning)



In a parallel development ECA President Brian Groombridge gave the Glendenning Memorial lecture to an appreciative massed audience during the Festival of Age in Brighton. The event was hosted by Brighton & Hove City Council and NEC member Chris Minter was one of the principal organisers.

In addition we supported a research initiative, funded by a local charity, concerning developments such as Sure Start in the education of young parents. This is an area of interest that we intend to follow up in the context of further policy decisions by Government.

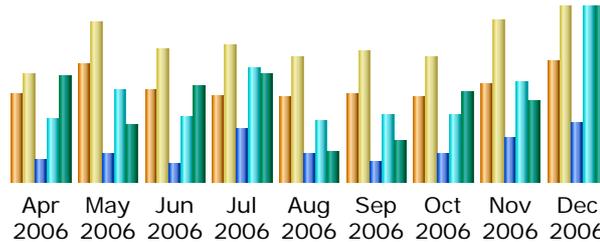
Advancing Communications

The further development of our website took place rapidly following Karen Read's appointment. She populated the previously blank pages and worked with the

designers to introduce necessary modifications. As a result the volume of traffic coming onto the site increased sharply just before Christmas.

Key to Columns

1. unique visitors
2. no of visits
3. pages
4. hits
5. bandwidth



Subsequently negotiations took place to move to a new generation of software which will make maintenance of the site easier while giving greater flexibility.

Meanwhile use of the 'tiki' resource by participants on the TEACH courses increased rapidly, in part thanks to increased confidence amongst members of the course team. This allowed us to monitor exchanges between participants which showed a real valuing of the relationships built across Europe as a result of working together on the course.

A second tiki was introduced to support the Teddy Bear project and although this was not greatly used it led towards another innovation, the use of Skype voice over internet. This provided an essential tool for telephone conferences.

In a surprising development we were approached by an international consultancy to work with a major international publisher on obtaining content from 'enthusiast' experts for web publishing. On this occasion the bid for EU funding was unsuccessful.

Partnership Working

Meetings in the West Midlands of the local partners delivering the Teddy Bear project formed an important element in its success.

Thanks to our long term collaboration with other bodies in the Community Sector Coalition it became possible to frame a collaborative bid for the sustainability project 'Every Action Counts'.

This partnership working also operates at the local level and this effect is evident in our relationships with Norwich Forum Trust and the Victoria & Albert Museum. As shown elsewhere our European Grundtvig partnerships with partners in Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy & Slovenia have been effective in bringing together staff and learners in innovative projects which make a clear difference to them as individuals as well as contributing to community living.

We commenced work with the Forum Trust on a provisional framework for a 'Transversal Action' within the new funding round where it would be possible to more explicitly link learning opportunities for children and young people with active engagement in topics shared with older neighbours.

While it is coincidental that both our Grundtvig projects have Finnish partners, it is more remarkable that through our President Brian Groombridge we have yet more links to that country. Brian, who holds a Finnish knighthood, introduced us to the Finnish Institute which not only hosted our 2006 AGM but also arranged for

the Chair and Treasurer to attend a reception at the Residence of their Ambassador. From the resulting contacts came an invitation to CICERO the educational research division of the University of Helsinki.

Staff Development

Our contribution to the staff development agenda has been valued by Lifelong Learning UK, the body responsible for the professional development of staff in libraries, archives, information services, work-based learning, further, higher and community learning. We have taken part in the initial meetings of Community Development Learning, one of the strands which is determining occupational standards for workers in a branch of adult learning.

The annual meeting of the South & East regional group attracted a strong audience. It focused on teaching & learning styles and speakers gave presentations focussing on the generic issues of staff development for teaching and/or supporting adult learning. Amongst them were: -

- Kirsten Gibbs from 'engage in the visual arts' (a leading international association for gallery educators, artist educators and arts and education professionals)
- Gerald Jones from the Mary Ward Centre, a specialist adult education college with a reputation for its wide curriculum, quality of teaching and learning and friendly atmosphere. The Mary Ward Centre was one of the founding members of the Association.
- Angela Joyce from Lifelong Learning UK.

Sustainability

Following announcement that the Government was taking additional steps to engage the third sector in mitigating environmental damage, our involvement in negotiations within the Community Sector Coalition achieved a consensus and ultimately a consortium was formed which included explicitly environmental organisations. The consortium successfully bid for resources from DEFRA for a distinctly new project which was launched as 'Every Action Counts'. The fund holder is NGO the Community Development Foundation, while some management functions are devolved onto bassac. The ECA then had to bid for funds from within that allocation, a process that turned out to be complex and arduous.

The Chairman & administrator Karen Read attended the launch event for 'Every Action Counts' and subsequently planned a strategy to promote the initiative in Norwich city centre during the two month period of the Earth Event built around the iconic 'Earth for the Air' outdoor photographic exhibition.



Susie White was appointed to 'meet & greet' visitors to the exhibition and to sign them up to the 'Every Action Counts' commitments which are the centrepiece of our involvement. This activity was generously supported by personal attendance of 'Embedding' Officer George Ruddock from bassac.

In December the Chairman took part in a panel discussion during an event held in the WEA offices in London organised by the Development Education Association. Highlight of this event was the presentation by novelist Beverley Naidoo of the 2006 Global Learning Award to Devon Development Education from the Global Centre in Exeter. The Centre provides resources, projects and training for teachers on Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development.



The award is sponsored by the British Council, the Co-operative College, the Department for Education and Skills' International Education Week, the Development Education Association (DEA), the University and College Union, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA)

The ECA, in pursuit of its own policy, extended the use of tele-conferencing and advanced communication tools to reduce travel requirements and resultant CO₂ emissions.

Policy and Political Perspectives

Although the Association is apolitical it does benefit from opportunities to meet senior politicians. There were further occasions to meet Bill Rammell the Lifelong Learning Minister, firstly in his own Harlow constituency where he spoke at a conference organised by the S&E Regional Committee and subsequently, as reported elsewhere, at the Foreign Office.

There was an opportunity to put forward to the Treasury the Association's concerns regarding the funding of adult learning when we met officials undertaking the Third Sector Review as part of our work with the Community Sector Coalition.

The Arts and Adult Learning

As mentioned above The Victoria & Albert Museum was again the venue for the South & East Region's annual meeting. On this occasion it coincided with a major exhibition, 'Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939' the period which coincided with the early history of the Association.

The concerns of members about the future of the arts and creative studies in Adult Education first came to full attention of the NEC through the work of Barbara Isherwood from Basingbourn Village College. Our anxieties have been increased by successive announcements from the funding bodies. The NEC in conjunction with another ECA member, Voluntary Arts England, is now engaged in extensive consultations about the best ways to address the challenges which this presents for institutions and learners alike.

Archives

Former ECA President Ronald Wilson's papers are now in the custody of the London University archivist. His last piece of work was a biography of Dame Mabel Tylecote who was a major adult education figure both in Manchester and nationally in the middle years of the last century. The biography was worked on by North Region colleagues during the year, with a view to early publication.

Retirements

Brian Groombridge, who first joined the NEC in 1951 and has been our esteemed President for four years, took the title of President Emeritus as he stepped back from active service on the committee. Thanks to Brian in the year we established links with the Finnish Institute in London who kindly played host to our AGM in October.

Vaughan Williams who held the Chair of the NEC for a time in the early 1970s and who had returned to represent Wales also stood down. So too did Hazel Dunn who has, amongst her other contributions, monitored our conference evaluations for some years.

The person who transformed the newsletter and contributed immeasurably to our publications, perhaps most notably the biography of Ray Lamb, was Alan Skinner who relinquished the post of Vice Chairman and at the same time ceased as our editor. Over many years in a regional capacity and later on the NEC, he made a huge contribution to the work of the Association.

In most cases the roles of Regional Treasurers came to an end and we thanked Colin Harding, Roger Haughton and Andrew Murray for their long service in this capacity.

Financial Review

Policy on Reserves

The Trustees seek to maintain a balance of £25K as a reserve. Reserves are held on deposit with the COIF Charities Deposit Fund.

Trustees' Expenses

Expenses were only paid to Trustees during the year to reimburse them for travel and subsistence in connection with and purchases made on behalf of the charity.

Trustees' Indemnity Insurance

No charitable funds have been used to purchase insurance to indemnify the Trustees against the consequences of any neglect or default on their part.

Accounting Policies

The Educational Centres Association is a registered charity and as such is governed by the Charities Act 1993. Under this Act and the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2000, it is classified as a small charity since it has gross income or total expenditure of not more than £100,000 per annum. Section 42(3) of the Act therefore entitles this charity to take advantage of the more limited and simplified presentation of its financial statements. As a result of this and to be consistent with prior years, only a Receipts and Payments Account has been prepared and presented. Meetings have taken place with a 3rd sector consultancy and a business strategist resulting in a parallel electronic accountancy record, established prior to implementation of full computerised accounting.

Regional Accounts

There is only one subsidiary account. This is for the South and East Region which had a limited number of transactions during the year relating to two locally organised conferences.

Sustainability

We are using the tools made available through Every Action Counts to review our own practices and will institute any changes in our procedures that may be indicated.

Where travel is undertaken on behalf of the Association every effort is made to book multiple engagements. Rail is the preferred mode of travel with advanced booking encouraged to take account of any discounts.

Funding from DEFRA

Bids under “Every Action Counts”, the sustainability project managed by the Community Development Foundation, have progressively strengthened the Association’s financial position.

Grundtvig Funding from the European Commission

The Association took responsibility for coordinating the Teddy Bear project at the request of the Herefordshire Council. This gave rise to additional financial commitments which were been partly underwritten by DfES as an element of annual grant.

The accounts submitted with reference to the TEACH project were completed and submitted in time. However apparently the Commission has delayed reimbursements while the procedures for the new Socrates call were being worked out. The Association had participated in this partnership project, funded by the Commission, under a contract with the Vastra Nylands Folk High school, Finland. It is in the nature of this ‘Socrates’ funding that up to 61% of approved expenditure will be reimbursed through the agency of the Folk High school, subject to the conditions of the grant being met.

Further Financial Review Details

The principal sources of funding are an annual grant from DfES and Membership subscriptions. The former had remained constant for three years but following a review undertaken by NIACE and on their recommendation, in the latest year there was a welcome increase in excess of 9% to £13,000.

Membership subscriptions in the year appeared higher than those of the year before. This resulted from the previous success of our fees collection processes in 2004/05 which brought in higher than usual receipts before the end of that financial year. However the overall trend is downwards due to the closure of or financial threat to former members.

As reported previously a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, in conjunction with the Forum Trust in Norwich, for a grant to conserve and interpret the ECA archive failed to impress the awarding body.

Similarly two bids relating to work with older people and with specific reference to reminiscence which were made on the Balance Foundation (unclaimed banking assets in dormant accounts) failed to receive a grant.

Support for Key Objectives

The move towards project type activity and reduction in the number of conferences offered reflects in part the fact that the Association is becoming better known and has a higher profile in its chosen fields. It also reflects the changing nature of the grants from DfES to the National Associations. The NEC has therefore decided that externally funded project activity will be its preferred option. Key areas for our engagement are; staff development, citizenship, inter-generational learning, adult learning in culture, creativity and the arts, sustainability and the uses of ICT related to the foregoing.

Accommodation

The National Office is located at a private residence where a rent-free room is dedicated to the Association’s business. It is a priority to establish an independent sustainable base of operations for the charity where current staff can be conveniently housed.

Key Players

The year was notable for the level of ill health amongst main players in the NEC. This necessarily restricted the range of activities which were brought to completion. It serves as a necessary reminder that the organisation is heavily dependent on the good will of individuals for its continuing success.

Future Plans

While we have yet to develop a formal Business Plan which would help us to focus on key agendas, we have succeeded in identifying the potential sources to meet some of our key objectives. As noted previously there is a case for linking the work in citizenship and sustainability more explicitly.

Realising the potential of the Teddy Bear Project has been a significant development for us as we took the lead in this EU funded project. As anticipated it called for different patterns of accountability and it is important that we have the staffing and trustee support to manage such increasingly complex agendas.

A bid was submitted for the Inter-AGE Culture Grundtvig 1 project, as a successor to the Teddy Bear project at the European level. This or any development from TEACH, will have to take account of the new funding regime established by the EU for the next seven years.

We intend to work through external agencies to secure core funding which will enable the charity to grow and build on our achievements of recent years.