

## Let's launch a new future **Why I am voting YES:** says Chief Executive

A vote in favour of raising the membership fee to £20 a year could re-launch the Fellowship into a new era of self sufficiency while retaining its special place in the NHS family.

That's the view of John Rostill, the Fellowship's Chief Executive who makes a passionate plea in this issue for members to vote in support of the increase in the first-ever individual ballot in its 40 year history.

"The reason I applied for this job is because it's the NHS Retirement Fellowship. I want to give something back and encourage more and more people to join. I am still enthusiastic about the Fellowship going from strength to strength. The withdrawal of our grant is a hiccup we have to get over."

"The NHS is what most of us went to work for, we still hold its principles dearly. I am still proud of my work in the NHS. I want our Fellowship to continue to be associated with the NHS and I think our members, who have appreciated what the Fellowship has done over the years, would wish it to continue. If I am wrong, I shall be devastated."

"With the financial problems facing the NHS we can not expect to be seen as a priority. We have to stand on our own two feet. I believe there is sufficient commitment and enthusiasm from the membership for the Fellowship to continue so that we can all deliver the service to our fellow members that we have done this year, not just next year but for all the years ahead."



"I am backing the best caring NHS charity. The members keep me re-fuelled and top up my batteries every day and have done for the past 26 years. Let's SUPPORT our Fellowship or LOSE it - for the price of a pub lunch once a year."

Ethel Armstrong, Patron, NHSRF

"We deserve to survive"



"The Fellowship deserves to survive as a national organisation" said Audrey Harris. "For nearly 40 years, thousands of people have worked to make it what it is – a Fellowship in which we all share the same ethos that led us to join the NHS. I'm supporting the proposal to enable us to be self sufficient."

Audrey Harris, Chairman, NHSRF

## It's your choice - please vote

This ballot is about the future of the Fellowship. It's the first in our history. Please take this chance to shape our future. Please read this special issue, and use your vote. The ballot paper and prepaid return envelope are enclosed.

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# The Birmingham debate



A swift AGM attended by over 250 members was followed by the chance for members to express views about the proposal. “Fellowship” brings you a summary of the points made.

Cambridge branch put the case for a “third alternative” that instead of facing a £20 capitation fee or disappearing altogether, the Fellowship could be dissolved and replaced by an association of branches.

John Rostill, Chief Executive, commented: “There is no support among the Trustees for this idea. We are an NHS organisation, not a group of social clubs with a loose connection and no central driving force.”

Postal member Valerie Evans said we may not need the Fellowship now - but you never know what you might need in future. Other members spoke of how the Fellowship had enhanced their life in retirement, and a member from Fife reminded the audience that their career in the NHS had been about service to others, not to

enrich themselves. If the NHS was in financial peril, we should stand on our own two feet.

Joy Kay (Wycombe) said the Fellowship was “a voice for NHS retired people” which would not be there as individual branches.

Michael Endean (Plymouth) said his small branch would leave and become independent. Other small branches were worried that a subs increase would deplete numbers to the point where the branch could not continue.

Applause greeted a comment that the proposed fee would mean branch membership was less than a cup of coffee a week.

Some branches said it was a struggle to convince members of the value of being part of a national Fellowship.

National activities – like the holidays, the golf tournament, the photographic group and the book club, are all run at no cost to the Fellowship. Special offers, like the 10% discount on Fred Olsen cruises, have been well used.

John Rostill said the Fellowship would have to ask itself the question: do we want to spend our money on the same things in the future as we have in the past? But he did not believe that a change to an association of social clubs would meet most people’s requirements – and he could not see many people at national level wanting to continue their roles.

Could the newsletter be emailed to members or could branches receive it by email and distribute it? When the subject had been raised with branches, most reacted with a definite no. Emailing individuals was a possibility, but so far only about 3,500 email addresses were available, and 400 of those had bounced. The newsletter can be read online in the members’ section of our website [www.nhsrf.org.uk](http://www.nhsrf.org.uk)

Branches commented that the Fellowship needs better publicity, and a higher profile with their local NHS Trust.

## Patron backs Fellowship future

Patron Ken Jarrold opened and closed the discussions with these thoughts:

1. The NHS is facing the greatest financial challenge in its history. It’s no use expecting any more grants. We must find our own salvation.
2. Concerns from the membership about the £20 capitation have two main themes: the scale of the increase and the cost of running the charity.
3. Whenever there is a crisis in any organisation, the focus comes on running costs at the top. “My overwhelming experience is that the Fellowship is run in a very cost effective way and the increase proposed is only what is required to keep us going.”
4. “I strongly support what is being proposed. It is the only way the Fellowship is going to survive – and I think it is very important that it does survive.”



And in summing up after 90 minutes of debate:

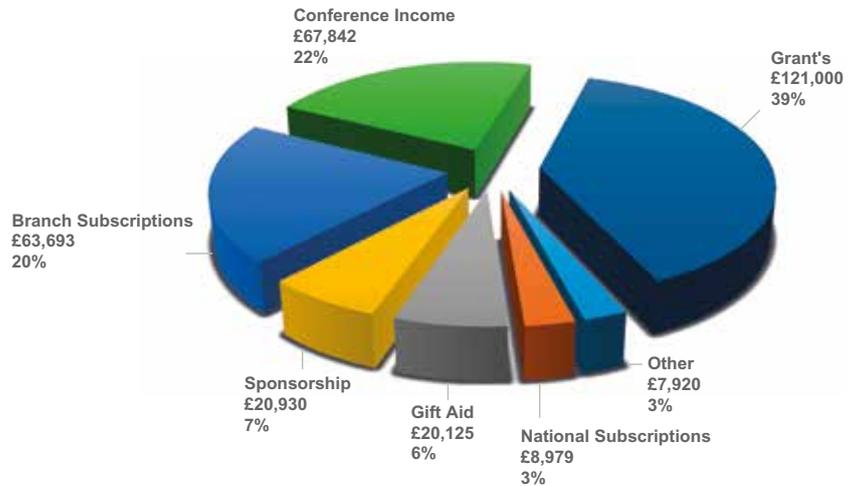
1. We have heard a lot about people employed centrally. The whole of the employed staff for England comes to 2.75 whole time equivalent.
2. Our plight is not the result of mis management. It’s simply because the NHS has stopped giving us a grant.
3. A loose association of independent branches (without charity status and a smaller head office function) would soon dwindle to a small group of branches.
4. Life experience tells us that we don’t understand the value of something until we have lost it.

*Ken Jarrold: “I urge you to support the measures being proposed.”*

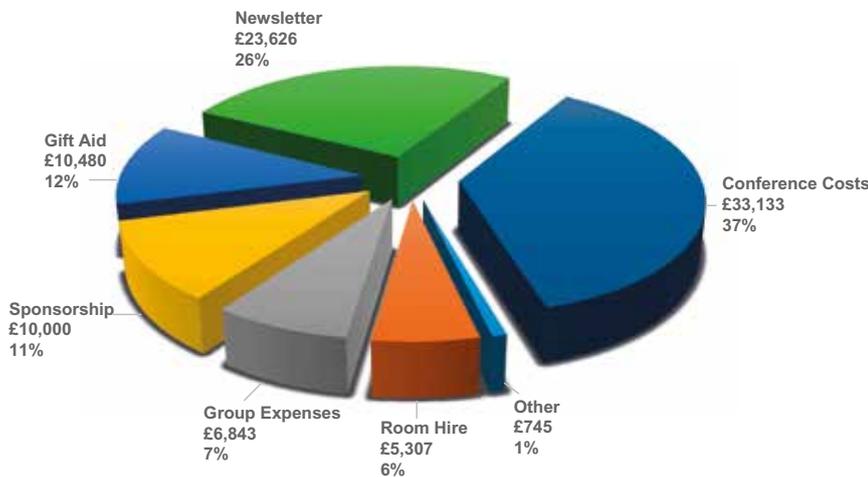
# Where the money came from last year

The NHSRF income last year (2015-16) included £121,000 in grants. That has stopped for 2016-17 and the Fellowship is continuing for this year by drawing on its reserves.

To be able to plan confidently for a secure future, the Fellowship must replace grant income by increasing subscriptions.

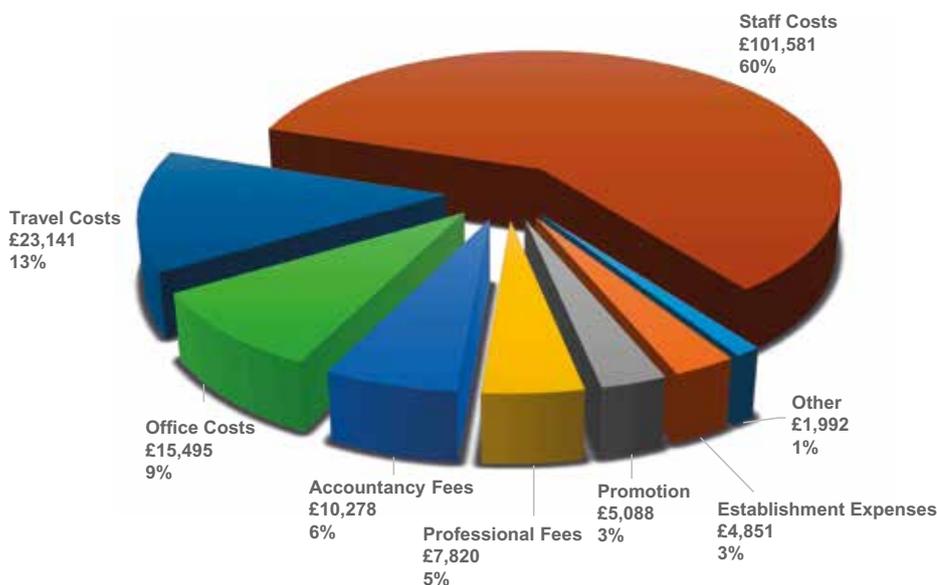


# How we spent it



The NHSRF spend in 2015-16 shows a deficit on the conference of over £33,000. There was no conference in 2016 and next year's event will be self sufficient.

# Management & Administration Expenses



Staff costs, which remain the largest part of the management and administration budget, have been reduced in recent years. All the team are part time, and add up to less than three whole time equivalent people.



# Your questions answered

*A full list of questions sent in by members and branches before the AGM was circulated at the meeting and a separate sheet is included with this newsletter. We have chosen the key questions to highlight here:*

## Can we give up being a charity and become an association of social clubs?

The answer is no. If the vote is to end the Fellowship, the Trustees have a responsibility for an orderly closure. They will have no responsibility for setting up an alternative structure – and would not want to. All funds, including branch funds, would go back to the centre to grant to other charities with a similar object. It would not be possible to transfer money to a non-charity.

## What happens if membership drops because of higher subs?

We would still be viable with 50% of current membership.

## What does our insurance cover?

Employers liability, public liability, fidelity guarantee, personal accident (covers staff only), trustee indemnity, legal expenses, personal accident assault (limit 85 years when carrying money), branch equipment and money (between £500 and £250,000).

## Why only two choices?

Reserves are being fast depleted (by £97,000 in current year). We must be self sufficient next year. Cuts would not solve the problem.

## “Branches get nothing from central office”

Central office organises and administers legal services, insurance, newsletter and publications, benefits, holidays, promotional events and maintain accounts. They provide policies and procedures, claim and distribute gift aid and undertake all charity requirements including database, accounts, AGM and trustee meetings.

## If the fees go up, will we still need grants?

No. We would be self sufficient – although we would continue to look for funds from other sources – as every organisation should.

## Will the fees go up again?

Members wanted assurance that capitation fees would not jump dramatically in future.

John Rostill outlined the history:

A fee of £1 was first introduced in 1989. 14 years later, after some debate, it went up to £1.50. In 2006 it was £2.50, 2007 £4, 2012 £5 and 2015, £10.

Now it is proposed to increase it to £20 in 2017-18. For the future, said John, it makes sense to have some form of mechanism in place. For example if a rate of 2.5% a year was chosen, it would mean an increase of £2 a year in four years time.

Looking back, the Fellowship was probably unwise not to have made some gradual increases in earlier years. But the regular support from the NHS and the bruising reaction from members to previous increases meant the issue got parked. The sudden decision by the NHS to cut grant aid has forced a dramatic change.

<b>1989</b>	<b>£1</b>
<b>1993</b>	<b>£1.50</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>£2.50</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>£4</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>£5</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>£10</b>

## What happens after the vote?

The ballot seeks answers to simple questions: do you want the Fellowship to continue in its present form – and if you do, are you willing to pay for it?

The proposal to increase the capitation fee from £10 to £20 is at the heart of the issue. If members back the increase, the Fellowship can survive without funding from anyone else. If they don't, the Fellowship will cease to exist.

If a majority of members voting say they want the Fellowship to stay roughly as it is, the Trustees will meet on 23 March and would be expected to approve the increase, which branches will need to pay by April 2018.

If the vote is against, we enter a process which is governed by the NHSRF constitution and its charitable status.

First step will be to call an Extraordinary General Meeting, where each branch will have one vote to decide the future. If branches vote to end the Fellowship, it will require a two thirds majority in favour of closure.

# NEW YEAR GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

## A new year, a new beginning: Let's pull together

As we start another year I am sure we all wonder what lies ahead. Some may be glad to leave the old year behind but I want to look forward to a new year for our Fellowship. As T.S.Eliot said "Last year's words belong to last year's language"

Our wonderful Fellowship has seen 39 new years, each with its own special challenges. In 2018 we will celebrate an amazing 40 years, a milestone to be proud of. The Fellowship is so important to so many people, as I have often

heard at the 'members day' meetings around the country. May we all now pull together to ensure that our Fellowship continues.

A new year, a new beginning. I send all members and staff my very best wishes for a happy new year, one of peace and goodwill.

Audrey Harris, Chairman, NHSRF

## Audrey travels north and south



Fellowship chairman Audrey Harris has been travelling north and south recently. Her visits included Yorkshire & North Lincolnshire Regional Conference (pictured, right, with members of Huddersfield branch 1 to r Colin Billington, Audrey, secretary Sheila Taylor, new chair Gillian Oldfield and retiring chair Marion Frankly.) and Bexley and District summer event where Audrey is pictured with chairman Sue Sauter, and Jack Yan regional representative.



# Benevolent fund under scrutiny

The Fellowship's benevolent fund came under scrutiny at the AGM with members questioning why it has £25,000 in reserve and spent only £509 last year on grants.

Should we close it, some branches asked – or can we divert the money into other projects. And why were branches asked to hold fund raising events when there was already plenty of money?

Chief Executive John Rostill explained that these questions were the reason why the Fellowship, backed by a grant from the CSIS charity, commissioned a six month review of the charity and appointed Bob Middleton as project officer.

His work was nearly complete but it was already highlighting a lack of knowledge that the fund exists or a clear understanding of how to apply for a grant. If we close the fund, the money goes to another similar charity.

The idea of local fund raising events was suggested as a good way of publicising the benevolent fund among branch members who might then be more aware of what it does and encourage more applications.

Further details are included on **page 8** and a publicity leaflet is being prepared.

## This could be the last one



It's nearly 20 years since the Fellowship's first newsletter in November 1997 – and if the decision is to disband the charity, this will be the last.

Andrew Moss, a member of Oxford branch, who has edited every edition since then recalled: "The late Roger Titley rang me up and asked me to produce it. He wondered what to put in it. He need not have worried. Since then it has become an important way to reach every single member with news of the Fellowship's progress, the achievements of members and branches, and to spread and share good ideas."

# AROUND THE BRANCHES

## Blandford volunteers honoured

Members from Blandford branch have received special honours for their service as volunteers.

They were part of an eight strong team volunteering in Blandford Alzheimer's Singing for the Brain and Memory Café Group which was chosen as Dorset's Volunteer Group of the Year 2016. They received the award from Debbie Ward, Chief Executive of Dorset County Council.



Even more remarkable, branch member Peggy Whitty, who is in her nineties, received the award of Dorset's Volunteer of the Year 2016 from Lord Julian Fellowes.



*Pictured here are volunteers Gerald Witt, Min Witt, Margaret (Peggy) Whitty and Sue Frizzle and a solo picture of volunteer of the year Peggy.*

## Pleasure theme for new photography competition

"Pleasure and enjoyment" is the theme for the Fellowship's next photography competition which closes on 28 February.

Entries are welcomed from any member and there is a prize of £100 for the winner and two prizes of £50 for runners up thanks to sponsorship from the Civil Service Insurance Society. Judges will be looking for an interesting interpretation of the theme that could involve subject like family, landscape, sport, home or holidays.



For more information see the Fellowship website: [www.nhsrf.org.uk](http://www.nhsrf.org.uk) or contact the Competition Co-ordinator: Anthea Graham, Glais Bheinn, Lochcarron, Ross-shire, IV54 8YB. Email: [photography@nhsrf.org.uk](mailto:photography@nhsrf.org.uk) Tel: 01520 722951



## Newcastle members gain new knowledge

Eight Newcastle members took a trip up the River Tyne on a bright sunny day August day – and realised how little they knew about their home area as they passed many bridges, a battle

scene, the Vickers factory and areas of recent redevelopment. They came away with new knowledge.



## Clwyd help cancer charity

Clwyd branch meetings, which usually involve speakers and a raffle, changed a little in October when the branch invited a representative from the Awyr Las charity to receive a cheque for £200 for the Mike Peters "By Your Side" appeal for cancer services in North Wales.

*Picture shows Pauline Card, vice chair presenting the cheque to Patrick Roberts from the Awyr Las charity.*

## Gin visit success



Members of Cosham branch tried the produce and had a good time at the Bombay Sapphire gin distillery in Hampshire. The wonderful buildings were once a corn mill and producer of Indian bank notes, hence the name of the gin.



## Amalfi holiday delights members

Seventy eight Fellowship members travelled to the Amalfi coast with Della holidays in October visiting many famous places in the area including Amalfi, Ravello, Sorrento, Naples and Pompeii.

Some brave group members even walked up to the smouldering crater at the top of Vesuvius. A highlight was a cruise along the Amalfi coast and

a tour of the Isle of Capri.

During the holiday members were treated to a visit by a very famous car and its driver. The Fiat 'rag top' convertible was used by Jackie Kennedy when she spent some time in the area in the 60s. With the car was the chauffeur who drove Mrs Kennedy around. At 89, he still had some tales to tell.

**Della Holidays is already thinking about holidays for 2017. Autumn holidays to Barbados and Dubrovnik and the Dalmatian coast are being planned and spring trips could include holidays to Alpine passes and Innsbruck, Bruges and Ghent, and Rome. For more information please contact Della Holidays on 01934 420318 or email [enquiries@dellaholidays.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@dellaholidays.co.uk)**



## Showers fail to dampen party



Showery weather did not dampen the hearts of about 60 members of the East Grinstead branch who enjoyed their first garden party in the grounds of one of the members and her husband's home who hosted the event.

Members were welcomed by chairman Gerry Baker and heard a talk on the Queen Victoria Hospital including an outline of the Trust's proposals for the coming year by Mrs Beryl Hobdon, Chair of the QVH Foundation Trust. Committee members prepared the tea, set up the tables and chairs, and served the food.

## Perfect day

Nottingham chairman Jay DeSilva gave a superb barbecue for members on a perfect summer day.



## Golf winners



Prem and Pauline Cunniah won the team event at the National Golf classic in Chepstow.

## OBITUARIES

### Kathleen (Sybil) Moores

Sybil joined Bristol Central branch soon after it started in 1979 and attended meetings regularly until her health declined in her 90s.

She was a very elegant lady who always dressed immaculately and was never seen without a hat. She was also an active member of University Hospitals Bristol Foundation Trust. Latterly she was housebound but still came to our summer and Christmas lunches. Members celebrated her 100th birthday at the summer lunch in 2015. Sybil was in residential care for the last few months and died soon after a fall, on her 101st birthday.

### Doreen Eden

Doreen Eden, a member of Wisbech branch, was a volunteer at the North Cambs Hospital for many years and worked tirelessly for the Friends of Wisbech Hospitals.

### Christine (Chris) Skidmore

Swindon Branch report with much sadness the death of Chris Skidmore, a valued committee member. She worked as an enrolled nurse at Princess Margaret Hospital and later at the Great Western Hospital, Swindon.

## Basildon in Cheshire

Basildon & Thurrock had their branch holiday at Alveston Hall, Cheshire.

*Our picture shows a happy golfing party during the holiday.*



## Pontefract knitters

Members of Pontefract branch, wearing some of the hats and scarves (of which there are lots) knitted by the Knit And Natter group and Kath, which helped to fill shoeboxes for children at Christmas.



Please keep  
this page –  
your members may  
need it one day

# THE NHSRF BENEVOLENT FUND



## *Help when you need it most*

### **What do we do?**

We offer grants to NHSRF members in a crisis, where they need to spend at least £300 on a specific item, for example replacement glasses, a disability scooter or wheelchair, a new cooker, fridge or washing machine or any specific crisis such as travel to an overseas funeral.

We can help members facing problems which need emergency action, like fire or flood – subject to it not being covered by their own insurance.

We may be able to help in other ways: please apply if you feel we could help, even though it is not one of the standard types of support.

### **What you can't apply for :-**

We don't make grants for house improvements, to repay debts or for financial/capital commitments.

### **Who qualifies for help?**

Members applying for a grant must  
have been a member for at least 12 months.  
be claiming for a genuine and real need in a crisis that needs financial support.  
have less than £4,000 in personal savings.  
be able to provide evidence of the need, either themselves or with help from a named representative.

The fund is intended to help members facing a single crisis. You can not make a claim year after year.

### **How do I apply?**

Complete the form from the members' section of the website  
<http://www.nhsrf.org.uk/members.html>  
or by post from Sherry Smith at Central Office on  
01305 361317.

### **Where else can I get help?**

Cavell Nurses Trust for nursing members at  
[www.cavellnursestrust.org](http://www.cavellnursestrust.org)  
or 01257 595999.

NHS Pensioners Trust at  
[nhsptinfo@gmail.com](mailto:nhsptinfo@gmail.com) or 01372 805760.

Social Services – to check whether there is disability support (for example for a scooter).

Citizens Advice Bureau to check eligibility for state benefits.

Fellowship is published by the NHS Retirement Fellowship,  
Forston Clinic, Charminster, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 9TB.

Telephone: 01305 361317 Email: [sherry.smith@dhuft.nhs.uk](mailto:sherry.smith@dhuft.nhs.uk) Website: [www.nhsrf.org.uk](http://www.nhsrf.org.uk)

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