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Minute of a meeting of **GENERAL MEETING** held in the Boardroom at Ingliston House, with Members joining in person and via Zoom at 4.00pm on Monday 20 November 2023

### **In the Boardroom at Ingliston House**

Robin Gray, President, in the Chair  
Jim Warnock, Chairman  
Alan Laidlaw, Chief Executive  
Marie Livingstone, Society Secretary

### **Members and attendees present**

See appendix

### **Preamble**

- P.1. A General Meeting of the Royal Highland & Agricultural Society of Scotland took place on 20 November 2023, attended by 55 members and chaired by RHASS President, Robin Gray. The purpose of the meeting was to agree the Annual and Term membership fees from 1 January 2024.
- P.2. The Society Secretary confirmed that the meeting was quorate.
- P.3. The President called the meeting to order.

### **GM01/11/23 Proposals for Annual and Term Membership fees from 1 January 2024**

- 1.1. It was for the Members in General Meeting to set RHASS membership fees.
- 1.2. Louise Elder, Chair of the RHASS Board's Membership Working Group (MWG), set out the analysis that the MWG had conducted which underpinned the proposals in the paper. The proposals came with the recommendation of the Board of Directors of RHASS.
- 1.3. The background to the proposed fees was discussed, including:
- 1.4. • Adult annual fees had been raised only once since 2018; Junior and Senior fees were last increased in 2016 and term membership had been raised once since 2016.
- 1.5. • As a charity, membership fees for RHASS had to reflect the significant benefits received by members including the right to attend the Royal Highland Show (RHS) on all four days, access to the VIP Members Village at the RHS, a number of discounts and offers including the ability to purchase discounted RHS tickets for friends and family.
- 1.6. • In the challenging economic climate, the Society was seeing substantial cost increases across all areas of operation, in particular staging the Royal Highland Show, and required to reduce costs and increase income in order to remain sustainable. Whilst inflation was thankfully starting to come down, it had been at a very high level for a long time and the Society had absorbed this.
- 1.7. The meeting was lively and engaged and a number of questions were raised in discussion including the following.
- 1.8. • Members sought reassurance that RHASS's finances would improve. Dennis Bridgeford, Honorary Treasurer, assured the meeting that the Board had been clear that RHASS's cost structure had to change and significant cost savings were being implemented alongside rises in income lines, of which membership fees was one.

- 1.9. • The importance of communication with members. All members had been emailed or written to with an invitation to attend the General Meeting (GM) and the paper presented at the GM was available on request to all members. RHASS's 2023 annual report would be presented at the 2024 AGM. This report would be made available as quickly as possible following completion of the audit.
- 1.10. • The number of members and membership types compared to 2018. The percentage of annual members had held steady at around 50% of total membership for at least the last 8 years. Total membership has grown back to about 500 members above 2018 numbers, having seen an expected reduction through the pandemic years.
- 1.11. • Whether a reduction in membership numbers had been seen following the last increase and whether any reduction was anticipated following this increase. There had been no reduction in overall membership numbers following the increase in January 2023. Modelling had been undertaken as part of the detailed analysis behind the proposed fee increase. Whilst a significant drop-off in annual members was not anticipated, as membership remained very good value compared to other events and based on the level of benefits received (including £1.4m equivalent in public RHS tickets in 2023), the additional income generated from the price rise on annual membership could accommodate a 19% reduction in annual membership numbers before this was cancelled out. Whilst the Board neither anticipated nor wanted to see this level of drop-off given the importance of members to the Society, from a solely financial perspective this income would be expected to be recouped from the additional public onsale tickets available, given a 3-day sellout show in 2023.
- 1.12. • How many staff members were employed in the secretariat in 2018 and currently. Staff numbers in this area were the same.
- 1.13. • It would have been preferable to undertake small, regular increases in membership. Membership fees had been planned to go up in 2020 but given the impact of the pandemic, the Board took decision not to do so and then to wait until after the 2022 Show to raise membership fees, recognising the wider challenges within the sector.
- 1.14. • The number of people attending the RHS 2023. Over 217,000 people had attended the RHS 2023. This included Members, Competitors, Traders, Exhibitors, Children aged 15 and under, General Admission, Staff and Volunteers. Pre-booking and scanning at the gates meant those numbers were robust.
- 1.15. • The cost of staying in Edinburgh for the Show and the suggestion that the charity move to a new venue. It was noted that there had been significant investment in the site which was purpose-built to host the Show and also generated significant income from third party events and commercial property matters which supported the Show and the charity and it would be very expensive to move to new land. This would be discussed by the Board.
- 1.16. Reassurance was given that the third-party issue with posting membership packs experience in 2023 would not be repeated.
- 1.17. Following due discussion, the proposals for the following membership fees from 1 January 2024 were passed:**
- 1.18. Adult Annual - £105**
- 1.19. Senior Annual - £50**
- 1.20. Junior Annual - £50**
- 1.21. Adult Ten-Year Term - £1,050**
- 1.22. It was noted that there was no recommended change proposed to Life Membership. The Life Membership fee from 1 January 2024 had already been set at £2,550 by the Members in General Meeting in October 2022.
- 1.23. Junior Term Membership would be removed as a membership option. Very few of these Membership types were purchased and the administrative cost associated with them was

disproportionate. Junior Members would still be able to take out life or annual Membership if they wished to do so.

Jim Warnock, RHASS Chairman, closed the meeting with a vote of thanks to the President. He thanked all for their attendance and wished the Society a successful, safe and prosperous year.

Signed: .....

Chair

Date: .....

## Appendix – Attendee List

1	Adam	Kay
2	Alexander	David
3	Arnot	Bill
4	Beck	Ian
5	Benzie	Philip
6	Bridgeford	Dennis
7	Brunton	Ian
8	Buchanan	David
9	Donaldson	Alistair
10	Downie	William
11	Dun	Kath
12	Dunn	Suzie
13	Elder	Louise
14	Fitzpatrick	Julie
15	Gibson	Archie
16	Gilmour	Andrew
17	Graham	Robert
18	Gray	Robin
19	Gray	Gordon
20	Harvey	Donald
21	Hastings	Jim
22	Hay	Sandy
23	Henderson	Tom
24	Hodgson	Guy
25	Hornall	Andrew
26	Laidlaw	Alan
27	Laidlaw	Lucy
28	Laird	Lyle
29	Lawrie	Susan
30	Lithgow	Gillian
31	Logan	James
32	Mackie	Sarah
33	McClymont	Hugh
34	McCreery	Jackie
35	McLaren	James
36	Milne	Janice
37	Mutch	Eric
38	Newlands	Robbie
39	Rawson	Fiona
40	Rennie	Andrew
41	Ritchie	Liz
42	Roan	Aylett
43	Roebuck	Isla
44	Roebuck	Fiona
45	Shepherd	Christo
46	Sloan	Bryce

47	Smith	Jimmy
48	Stephen	Kathryn
49	Struthers	Matthew
50	Sutherland	Gordon
51	Teasdale	Gillian
52	Tennant	Thomas
53	Thomson	Jane
54	Thomson	Matthew
55	Warnock	James C.

Attendees:

- Alisdair Caulfield
- Chelsea Krausen
- Mark Currie
- Marie Livingstone
- David Webster