

NASS Executive Council Report to the NASS AGM 7 May 2011

1 Introduction

This report covers the period February 2010 to April 2011. This is the third NASS Annual General Meeting.

The Executive Council that was in place from January 2009 to February 2011 was recently replaced by a new Executive Council. They are as follows:

NASS President	George McGrath (Chair)
East of England (Newmarket) Ethnic Minority Seat	Oleksandra Myrnychenko
East of England (Newmarket) General Seat	Nick Payne
East of England (Newmarket) General Seat	Aimee Hockley-Righton
Fee-Paying Members Seat	Debbie Phillips-Brant
North East England (Malton) Womens Seat	Anne Sewell
North West England (Middleham) General Seat	Mark Billingham
South East England (Epsom) General Seat	Ken (Scobie) Bedford
South West Region Womens Seat	Lynne Clarke
West Midlands General Seat	Francesca Heape

2 Finances

NASS finances are under pressure due to the reduction of prize-money income following the decline of levy available to be put into prize money.

In addition, for the past two years NASS has had extra income from the Escrow Account which was established following the regulatory body having stopped the prize money contribution going to the SLA and then NASS. When NASS had demonstrated that it was a viable and effective representative organisation for Stable Staff, that money was gradually released to NASS and supplemented the prize money income. This enabled NASS to run a bigger and more effective organisation than it would otherwise have been able to do.

The decline in the prize money contribution and the closure of the Escrow Account has meant that for 2011 the Executive Council has had to agree a smaller annual budget. For the two previous years NASS' Annual budget has been about £250,000 per annum. For 2011 the budget has been set at £204,000. This should leave a small surplus that will help see NASS over the 2011/12 winter period when prize money income drops substantially.

The 2011 Budget is based on extra income to be obtained either by an increase in the prize money percentage allocated to NASS or if that doesn't materialise then the British Horseracing Authority has said that it will make some money available to NASS as compensation for the work we do on their behalf.

It should be possible to give a verbal report at the AGM as to the outcome of this.

3 Casework and Representation of Members

The representation of Members and follow-through of casework is the bedrock of trade union activity. In the case of NASS, due to our funding arrangement, we not only represent NASS Full Members but also provide advice, guidance and representation to all Stable Staff.

As recently reported in the NASS Stable Talk Newsletter, NASS has now obtained £470,000 in compensation for Members and other Stable Staff from September 2007 to March 2011. So far NASS has not lost a claim to the Employment Tribunals on behalf of all Stable Staff that we have represented.

The whole organisation is geared to ensuring that representation is provided speedily and effectively. The office responds to phone-calls, emails and messages left on our website. The office staff handle the case as far as they can, including speaking to the employer under the guidance of the Chief Executive. When it requires a visit or representation then it is passed to the Chief Executive and either he takes it on, no matter where it is, or is passed to one of the Regional Coordinators (depending on location) that NASS uses on a self-employed basis. The Chief Executive will deal with as many cases as possible to minimise the cost to the Association.

The Executive Council have been trying to build up regional NASS organisation by the use of the self-employed Regional Coordinators. Recently Regional Coordinators were asked to take on case work within their region if the Chief Executive is not available.

4 Legal Representation beyond the Workplace

With regard to the legal representation required beyond the workplace, NASS differentiates between NASS Full Members (that is those who have signed up to join NASS) and Associate Members (those who have not signed up to become NASS Full Members but who NASS are required to assist).

If our Solicitors, Morrish LLP, determine that a Full Members case has a 50/50 chance of success then NASS pays for the cost of legal representation. Where the person is an Associate Member then NASS will not pay for the cost of legal representation but will be prepared to refer the case to our Solicitors, who have an understanding of racing issues, on a “no win, no fee” basis. This means that the criteria for pursuing a case is different.

In regard to Personal Injury claims if Morrish LLP deems that there is a case worthy of pursuing, whether it is a NASS Full Member or Associate Member, NASS underwrites the cost of the legal action and so it is free to all Stable Staff.

Recently, the Executive Council considered a report from the Chief Executive in regard to the cases that NASS funds and decided that in those cases when a settlement or victory occurs then 10% of the award should be paid back to NASS to compensate for NASS funding the case and for the cost of the additional work that

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NASS carries out in these cases. Endorsement by the AGM of this Report will put that change into the NASS Rules.

5 2010 Pay Claim and Pay Negotiations

As was reported to the last AGM, held on the 25 January 2010, part of 2009 Pay Claim settlement had been agreement to a Pay Review and to re-open pay negotiations in March 2010 when the financial picture might have been cleaner.

The Pay Review commenced with a Pay Survey of all Trainers. When the pay negotiations were re-opened in March 2010, the response to the Pay Survey had been collated and showed a significant number of Stable Staff being paid above the National Minimum Rates. It has been difficult to follow the Pay Review through.

The NASS Executive Council presented an updated version of the 2009 Pay Claim and included demands for a number of improvements in other conditions of service as well as pay. At this point the NTF were still not able to come close to the NASS Pay Claim and following further negotiations it was agreed to accept a 2.2% increase in the National Minimum Rates from October 2010 (this figure had already been announced as the Governments increase in the National Minimum Wage) along with an extra two days holiday and other improvements to conditions of service.

For this year, the Executive Council has accepted the recommendation from the Chief Executive to set a longer term target to be achieved by October 2013 to try to bring Stable Staff earnings more in line with the national average weekly earnings. The strategy is designed to cope with the current poor economic situation whilst seeking long term commitment to improvement. If no commitment is given or no tangible improvement in the next two years then a more aggressive campaign than we have been able to produce so far will be required to attempt to achieve greater improvement in the pay position.

6 Membership

NASS now has 2400 Full Members out of a Stable Staff workforce of 7400 which is a membership density of 30%. A number of activities have been conducted to try to increase Membership levels. The NASS office sends a letter to all new starters as identified from Weatherbys and encourages anyone making contact with the office who is not a Member to join.

NASS now has 17 Fee-Paying Members. They are people in racing who are not eligible to have free Membership but who want NASS Membership for future, or even immediate, representation and agree to pay £5 per month for that opportunity. We are trying to increase the numbers to assist NASS's financial position.

7 Regional Coordinators

It was reported to the last AGM that 3 Regional Coordinators were being employed on a free-lance basis, in the following regions namely: Tim Lyle – South East (Epsom) and Central England (Lambourn), David Holland – North East (Malton) and North West (Middleham), Lynne Clarke – South West England.

Six months later the scheme was extended with 2 new people joining it: Hazel Giffen – Wales; Fran Heape – West Midlands. Lynne Clarke resigned to take up a post with Racing Welfare. Jim Cornelius, Chief Executive, covered those Regions without a named Regional Coordinator as far as possible.

The role of Regional Coordinator was to recruit Members; recruit Mailbox Representatives; develop Regional Committees and generally be the public face of NASS in the Region.

At the time the Executive Council developed the Regional Coordinator scheme further they were concerned about the failure to develop the Regional Committees any further than the three that had previously existed. It was decided that the scheme would be reviewed in 6 months time and any Region not having a Regional Committee would lose its Regional Coordinator.

When the Executive Council came to review the scheme in February 2011, it was recognised that some Regions had only had a specific Regional Coordinator for a shorter period than others and that they should be given longer to develop. With the failure to establish or maintain Regional Committees in Lambourn and Malton, Tim Lyle and David Holland were withdrawn from these Regions in regard to development work and would only be available for casework representation.

The Executive Council also decided to ask Regional Coordinators, with appropriate training, to do representation when the Chief Executive wasn't available and to cease the previous posts of North and South Consultants.

8 NASS Mailbox Representatives

A NASS Mailbox Representative is a Full Member of NASS who agrees to receive additional information from NASS and to assist by distributing Newsletters etc.

We now have 57 Mailbox Representatives from the 9 NASS Regions. The aim is to organise the Mailbox Representatives in each Region to form a Regional Committee where one doesn't exist.

2 years ago we held our first training conference for Mailbox Representatives and the second one will be held on 5 & 6 May 2011 in London. Its theme is the Donoughue Stud and Stable Staff Commission Report and workshops will be organised around that topic.

9 NASS Special Merit Award

This year saw the second NASS Special Merit Award as part of the Godolphin Stud and Stable Awards. Due to problems encountered in the first year, the NASS Award Panel was changed to comprise 2 NASS Trustees, the Chief Executive and the previous year's winner, Scobie Bedford. The award was given to George McGrath, NASS President, who was an outstanding candidate and he was also runner-up in the Dedication to Racing Award. NASS Members were winners in 4 out of the 6 Awards.

10 NASS V Irish Stable Staff Association Football Match

The Irish Stable Staff Association (ISSA) challenged NASS to a football match and we reciprocated by inviting them to play us in Newmarket last November.

A lot of work was put into the event from many participants. Nick Payne volunteered to be coach and spent a lot of time travelling around the Regions picking the Members of a squad and then training them at the weekends.

As we were hosting the ISSA Team and officials for the weekend, it was necessary to make a lot of arrangements and raise sponsorship funding for both putting together our team and also to cover the costs of food, accommodation etc. Ultimately £7,610 was raised and with an overall cost of £11,205 for everything, NASS only had to foot a smaller bill than might have been the case.

All Sponsors have been written to and given a copy of the Accounts and a number have said they will contribute again for the return match in Ireland. The weekend of 18-20 November has been set for the rematch.

11 Betfair/NASS Minimum Standards for Stable Staff Facilities at Racecourses Project

The NASS Executive Council agreed to establish Minimum Standards for Stable Staff Facilities at Racecourses. The intention was to build upon the BHA Regulation without expecting all Racecourses to achieve the goals set out in the NASS Charter for Stable Staff. It also went into more detail than the Charter.

NASS was approached by Betfair with the offer of a donation of £25,000 to be used for the benefit of Stable Staff. A number of ideas were discussed and Betfair liked the idea of assisting us to achieve the NASS Minimum Standards through making the money available to Racecourses to make improvements on a match-funded basis.

The Panel looking at bids for the money are planning to visit three Racecourses in the week after the AGM and the final beneficiaries should be announced in June.

12 NASS Credit Union

The plan to establish a NASS Credit Union was reported to the last AGM. Since that report a considerable amount of effort was put into work leading up to its establishment. An offer of start-up funding was obtained from the BHA but they understandably wanted assurances that the money would be usefully spent and there was sufficient interest amongst NASS Members and other Stable Staff for it to succeed.

Unfortunately, despite a number of attempts to secure an indication of support from NASS Members we were unable to do so and had to drop the project. As we couldn't guarantee the success of the Credit Union there was no justification in spending NASS money any more on it and particularly as we couldn't justify it to the funder.

The Chief Executive remains convinced that if it had been established then the NASS Credit Union could have proved very beneficial to Stable Staff. The idea is not completely dead as there may be a possibility of joining an already established Credit Union which would avoid start-up costs. But at this stage there is no further action being taken.

13 Supporters of Stable Staff (SOSS)

Supporters of Stable Staff was established a couple of years ago as a vehicle to assist NASS develop a network of supporters. There was quite a lot of interest at the beginning but it has been difficult for NASS to put in the personnel resources to build the organisation. It was always intended that there be social activities for SOSS Members in conjunction with NASS and other racing events. However, it has taken all of our efforts to maintain the functioning of NASS, which must come first.

We produced some SOSS notelet/cards with horseracing pictures and have been selling them at various events.

We were required to establish a legal framework for SOSS which cost NASS in legal fees. That and the cost of producing the notelets are shortly to be recouped by NASS from the money raised by SOSS and when all the notelets are sold the remainder of SOSS money will be considered to be used for the benefit of Stable Staff.

14 NASS Stable Talk

When NASS was created out of the Stable Lads Association, three issues of the newsletter, Stable Talk, had been produced in-house. After an experiment with one community newspaper design organisation, the NASS Stable Talk has been produced for nearly three years in the design that it is at present and assisted by Jamie Seabright. Its format has changed in that we have slowly moved up from a regular 4 page edition to it now being an 8 page newsletter which it has been for the past two editions.

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The aim is to broaden the participation in the newsletter and try to make it more accessible to Members.

15 NASS Oral History Project

The NASS Oral History Project was established three years ago and as with Supporters of Stable Staff it has been difficult to put the resources into it. We are working with an academic supporter, Janet Miller, who has begun to do some work on the Stable Lads Association archives. A few old Stable Lads have been interviewed and there are some more to do. The main purpose of the Project is to try to make contact with as many Stable Staff who were around or involved in the TGWU Stable Lads Strike in Newmarket 1974 before the Stable Lads Association was formed. But we are also interested in any Stable Staff who have worked in the Industry for a long time and can tell us about previous working conditions, etc.

16 NASS Chief Executive Election May 2012

Although it is some time away the Executive Council has to begin to make plans for the legal requirement of the post of leader of a Trade Union to be subject to election by all of that Union's Members.

The Stable Lads Association (now NASS) Chief Executive was elected in May 2007 and the post therefore comes up for election again in May 2012. We have decided to use the services of the Electoral Reform Society as previously and have agreed a draft outline of the election timetable which will be subject to consultation with them. It will then be publicised with the NASS Membership as appropriate.

17 Conclusion

This report identifies the main areas of work considered by the Executive Council and carried out by the Associations' staff and leading representatives.

There is, of course, a lot that goes into both this and other activities not reported here. The Executive Council would like to thank the NASS Office Administration, Toni Dean and Claire Bell, and the Chief Executive for the work they have done on behalf of NASS, its Members and all Stable Staff.