

Director's Speech 83rd Annual General Meeting 2nd October 2008

It has been an interesting year – immediately prior to my appointment as director the Health Minister obtained consent from the NI assembly to transfer the regulatory powers of the Society to a new, London based, UK wide body at some point in the future.

This consent was given conditionally and the conditions included consultation with PSNI and reversion to the Health Committee.

Prior to the debate at the Assembly the Society carried out extensive research and proposed a solution for the future of regulation and professional representation. That proposal has been further developed and is the basis for on-going negotiations with the department.

The Society has met the minister and the department in ongoing discussions on the future of both regulation and professional leadership for pharmacy in NI

The fact that health regulation is fully devolved in NI is something which is having an increasing effect on all regulators and the models of regulation in use up until now require adaptation to take account of the differences that are emerging from the different devolved countries.

Pharmacy is very well placed to show leadership in this, through GPhC, to help mould a body that provides sufficient consistency across the UK and into Europe whilst remaining agile enough to respond to local needs.

Engagement with the public and the profession in NI is an essential ingredient to ensure effective regulation that has the support and confidence of all the stakeholders.

In the short term we have secured legislative change for PSNI which will equip the Society with the most modern FTP legislation available and we will be changing the composition of Council to a more board-like, appointed structure, with parity of lay membership

A professional forum will be formed to begin the process of separated professional leadership, it will be able to both contribute to the vision and development of the profession and provide guidance to the new Council, particularly on matters of public safety

A public/patient forum will compliment the professional forum which will allow local contribution to regulatory management whilst providing similar advice to the Council as the professional forum.

Against the backdrop of these political changes the Society has had a very successful 2007/2008. Increased income has funded a significant increase in public affairs activity, much of which is channelled into effectively responding to consultations, interacting with the devolved assembly on a wide range of matters and improving communication with the membership. A generous donation from northern pharmacies trust has made this possible and I would echo the honorary treasurers thanks to them as set out in the annual report

Although expenditure increased we have been able to manage the increase within the boundaries set out in the business plan and have a small surplus which will contribute significantly to the changes I described earlier.

Whilst the bigger picture issues around devolution and professional leadership remain very important, the management of the Society are very focussed on the delivery of the organisations core business – that of protecting the public and supporting professional development.

I would like to compliment the committees of the Society and the individual members who give generously of their time to support this important work and I would like to appeal for more assistance from all members. It is a time of significant change for pharmacy locally and participation will allow individuals to contribute positively to that change and the sessions, though often very involved, can be fun as well.

If you are able to help please let me know after the meeting.

To conclude, we have a busy year ahead, this is a time of great opportunity for pharmacy and pharmacists, the Society will continue to develop its two key themes, around the development of robust local regulation and creation of a strong forum within which the profession can marshal its expertise to ensure that the public and patients in NI have world class services that are accessible, safe and accountable.