

Dear members,

I'm sure by now you are familiar with my suspension. You will have seen the series of allegations (unsupported by evidence) sent to you by the Chair. You will have also seen, months later, a statement from me produced in response to the Chair's statement.

It will be apparent to you that there is a discussion on-going about the governance of the Association. This is not politics, it is about good governance and whether our rights as members are protected by our constitution. My opinion is that they are not. We have a National Committee (NC) who do not abide by the constitution, and a Constitution Trustee who does not enforce the constitution.

The NC have twice voted to suspend me from my elected role as Treasurer without asking to see evidence to back up the most serious allegations from the Chair. The constitution (Clause 11.6.2) says that the NC should "examine the case" for suspension but how can they have done this? Members of the NC who were under investigation for financial transactions voted to suspend me. Is this good governance? The Chair has signed contracts for thousands of pounds of unbudgeted expenditure, without following correct procedure (e.g., providing three competitive quotes, justifying the need for the expenditure). I challenged this behaviour and yet the Chair was able to call for a vote for my suspension and the members of the NC agreed. Is this good governance?

There is an alternative. I think the prospects for good governance would be much improved if there were a constitutional right to appeal to an agency outside the association. This would provide a much-needed check to the power of the National Committee. There is nothing like the knowledge that one's actions and decisions can be scrutinised by an independent agency to promote good decision-making.

I am proposing a change to the constitution to say that any member with a complaint about an officer or officers of the NC can request arbitration from an outside agency duly appointed by members at the AGM. Adding to the constitution would ensure that this right cannot be removed except by vote of members at the AGM. There are several possible options to be evaluated. Yes, it may cost money to do this, in the same way that it costs money to have the accounts audited. But some things are worth spending money on and the support of democratic processes and good governance are important if the association is to be a healthy place for us all.

To speak plainly, as long as the NC are free to ignore the constitution it doesn't really matter who the Treasurer is. A Treasurer who tries to uphold the constitution and the rights of members can be removed and a compliant alternative given access to the bank account. The most important goal now is to have independent arbitration.

I am proposing a second change to the constitution to require that a secure system of electronic voting is set up. The constitution already allows for this but no system has been set up. Systems are out there that will do the job very well. With an e-voting system in place, any decision proposed by the NC requiring ratification by members could be ratified, or otherwise, within 30 days by an e-vote. If an officer was unable to continue in their role then there could be an election for a new officer rather than an appointment by the NC.

And finally, the traditional statement explaining why I am applying for the post of Treasurer. My motivation in applying for this post is to contribute to the association that has played an important role in my life for the last 30 years. To put it simply, it is time to "put something back". I believe that in my 20 months as Treasurer I placed the interests of members first and I acted fairly and consistently without favour or discrimination.