

NORTHERN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY – PROPOSED INCREASE IN SUBSCRIPTION RATES

As those who have been paying attention to our treasurer's reports at the last few Annual General Meetings will be aware, they have shown widely varying annual surpluses and deficits. Three of the last five years have shown a loss (albeit that in 2021-22 was negligible) and two showed surpluses – but not enough to cancel out the losses. This coming year will almost certainly add to the overall loss. Happily, a substantial bank balance resulting from 'windfall' surpluses on events in previous years has allowed us to absorb the losses without undue concern. However, it has become clear that there is a structural weakness in our financial position.

It has been the committee's policy that the Christmas party and various tours for which separate charges are levied should break even and that the subscriptions should cover the lecture programme and the basic costs of running the society (including the AGM costs excluding refreshments). Analysis of the relevant figures over the last five years again produces widely varied results but where surpluses have arisen they are largely due to the effect of the COVID-19 lockdowns, which dramatically reduced lecturers' travelling and entertainment costs - only modestly offset by the monthly fee for our Zoom account.

Now that 'live' lectures have been resumed the associated costs have returned, but we are also maintaining our Zoom account as it has proved valuable for those members unable to travel to the venue as well as enabling us to make recordings when the speakers permit. The establishment of our website has also introduced an additional financial burden. A rough calculation of anticipated annual costs is as follows:

Lectures (inc. travel & accommodation expenses, meals and book tokens):	say £700
General admin. (programmes, flyers, correspondence, Zoom and website):	say £800
AGM (venue, mailing of papers beforehand):	say £500
Insurance:	say <u>£250</u>
Total anticipated expenditure per annum	£2,250

Our current subscription income is around £1,500 per annum

The last increase in rates, voted on at the 2008 AGM, took effect in 2009/10 – i.e. 15 years ago. The increase was from £9 single and £12 double to the present rates of £14/18 – in other words, a 50% increase.

Using the Bank of England's on-line inflation calculator, £14 in 2008 is equivalent to approx. £21 now and £18 = £27. In other words, a 50% increase.

On a very rough calculation, if we raised the subscriptions by the same percentage again this time it would yield an increased income of around £750.

Added to the present subscription income of about £1,500 this gives an anticipated income of £2,250.

Of course, this calculation is necessarily very approximate but it strongly suggests that such an increase is needed if we are to provide the events that our members expect.

The need for such a increase might be questioned whilst we still have a healthy balance at the bank but it is necessary for us to maintain such a reserve to underwrite the costs of the more ambitious events such as the weekends away as well as to meet 'capital' expenditure such as that incurred recently on equipment needed for Zoom streaming and recording of our live events.

Past experience teaches that any change in the subscription rates causes considerable chaos as members' bankers orders have to be changed. So it is intended that the proposed increase, which will take effect for subscriptions due on 1st March 2024, should stand for at least ten and hopefully another fifteen years.

The student subscription currently stands at £9. We have just one student member at present so in order to attract more it is proposed that a smaller increase be applied to this figure.

The proposal to be considered at this AGM is therefore that the single person subscription be raised from £14 to £21, that the subscription for two people living at the same address should rise from £18 to £27 and that the student subscription should rise from £9 to £10.