

## **Chairman's Report 2017**

In the Club Industry, as in Life, change is inevitable. How we cope with change and our reactions to that change vary from individual to individual. We all are creatures of habit and it is said that the older we become the harder it is to cope with and accept change. At this time we as a club are coping with and accepting change in varying degrees. As in most situations those who find acceptance difficult complain the loudest.

We as a board have had to respond to and lead that change. We as a board along with management have had to bear the brunt of criticism mainly from those who cannot cope with those inevitable changes and are complaining the loudest.

Prior to the retirement of previous management your Board undertook a professional business audit of the club engaging Greg Russell and Associates to fulfil that task as we were well aware that changes to the functioning of this club were vital if we were to survive. I can thankfully say that all members and staff can rest comfortably in knowing that not only have the recommendations from that report have been fully addressed and we have been placed upon a very sound and progressive business footing as a result.

But over-riding the changes accompanied by all the disquiet aired by those who didn't want any change at all and have continued to air their views to all who care to listen, there is a different vibrancy and direction within your club. Things are happening and the members and visitors can see and feel the change. But most importantly they still experience that welcoming atmosphere for which our club is renowned.

Our staff, despite the many new faces and changes in areas of responsibility, retains that "Happy Hexham" welcome for their members and guests even though many of the old faces have gone. The Riverside Bistro remains the drawcard for so many for lunches and evening meals with Ricky and Lilly at the helm. Our raffles and promotions – especially the Membership Badge Draw and Meat Raffles – continue to attract members and guests in large numbers.

Initially on the Board front we lost Ted Mullins and Grahame Booth who both resigned for personal reasons. Just prior to Christmas 2016 we received the resignation of Bob O'Dell also for similar reasons. Meanwhile we had welcomed to the board Alan Mitchell who replaced Bill Baldwin following election from the floor of the Annual General Meeting with John Appleby assuming the Treasurer's position held by Bill for many years. It should be pointed out here that Bill had indicated previously that he intended to resign following the retirement of Jon Chin as Ted and Grahame both subsequently did. The Board continued to function with seven directors opting to not replace the two who initially resigned. However, as a result of Bob's departure your directors invited Jason Dunn, a well-known Newcastle solicitor and Newcastle City Councillor to fill the void. Thankfully Jason accepted the invitation and we certainly welcomed Jason's legal expertise and value to your club's board filling the casual vacancy. Since becoming a director Jason has proven to be a valuable acquisition for your club. Then in recent months Keith (Doug) Tonks left the club to play bowls with a neighbouring club therefore creating a further vacancy which remains at present.

I do take this opportunity to recognise the service to the club of Ted and Bill who served as Directors for twenty three and nineteen years respectively through the Jon Chin period of management. They

both deserve the gratitude of the members for such long service. I also thank Grahame, Bob and Keith for the time that they have given to your club's directorship. All of the directors mentioned had assisted in bringing about the much needed changes.

The changes to our staff – brought about mainly by retirements – have seen us welcome John Richards to one of our senior bar supervisory roles along with the promotion of Christine Morgan and Michael Vasilou to senior positions. We have also benefited from the expertise and experience of Jennie Crowe in the role of Office Manager following Dot Shakespeare's retirement. The delegation of staff responsibilities has been one of Ross' tasks following the review and staff departures. This is where many changes behind the scenes have occurred.

Then we have the long running saga of the Waste Water Treatment Plant. Whilst much of the groundwork was done by the previous management the finalisation has proven to be a most complex and exceedingly frustrating process for all concerned. The major change will be in the savings that will begin to show in our finances resulting from the cessation of the cash draining weekly multiple pump-outs once the river outlet is in full operation.

Next we see the Harrington properties showing a small but marked increase in income with the duplex units 5 and 6 and the neighbouring house now enticing long-term public tenants and our front four units maintaining regular usage. We are looking carefully at present at how to best enhance this great asset in future years.

The air-conditioning issues that have plagued the club for so long have been resolved and we can now feel much more comfortable throughout the whole club following rectification works, especially in the top end of the Bistro.

In the area of Strategic Planning your Board, under the guidance of General Manager, Ross, has set out the direction of the club for the next three to five years and has replaced our previous planning document. I feel very confident that these plans will lead the way into a very bright future for the club.

The establishment of a coffee shop – something that a majority of members requested through survey – is high on our agenda. Also the provision of a courtesy bus was another member request that is in our plans and has been trialled with varied success and usage by members.

A further project - one which has the dual purpose of reducing our costs and our carbon footprint – is the placement of some ninety solar panels on the broad area of the club's roof. Previous management advice was that this could not be done but with engineering direction we are confident of this project being successful. It will take a little time before we see the full financial benefits of this undertaking. Also, in an effort to become more environmentally friendly, we are looking to perhaps irrigate our greens and surrounds with the treated water from our WWTP.

Our upstairs facilities are seeing greater usage following a concerted push to attract corporate and community training seminars, functions and meetings. We plan to tap into this profitable market and it is proving to be a drawcard for more local and national companies as well as many community and sporting organisations due to our location close to industry and on a main thoroughfare. With some alteration and upgrade to the upstairs layout we may provide a range of attractive options for

usage of this nature as we endeavour to establish your club as a function destination for the north and western suburbs of Newcastle.

Financially we are in a sound position remaining debt free. Trade has been consistently above the patterns of previous years and our current trading income is showing a growth in our profit takings as you can see in our financial report. In particular we saw a real boost to our income over the October to January period as the maximum valued Badge Draw and Ham raffles enticed many members to spend time here.

Finally I must offer an enormous "thank you" to our staff who I believe to be the brightest and most welcoming of any staff in our area for your efforts across a very difficult year for you all. I know that one of the reasons for our continued level of patronage is you, our staff and your professionalism, positive attitudes and dedication.

I can say with some degree of confidence that I believe that your club, Hexham Bowling Club, has a bright and prosperous future before it.

I sincerely thank all who have contributed to the administration of this great club, particularly Ross Seabrook whose leadership has proven to be invaluable, my fellow directors and staff, over the past year.

Les Carter    Chairman