

National Chairpersons report 17th February 2024
**18th National Annual General Meeting / 83rd Annual National
Conference**

Dear Friends,

The past year has been a challenging one for all of us and personally a mixture of success and disappointment. I am more concerned than ever about the future of Plus and that we now ignore the warnings at our peril.

There have been some brighter moments that I feel need to be acknowledged, Kings Lynn, Lincs Quest and Stevenage consistently thrive as large groups. Midland's area social media publicity shines too [Midland Plus – Get Active with us \(aboutmeetingfriendsplus.org.uk\)](http://aboutmeetingfriendsplus.org.uk)

Southern Area continues to run a successful weekend event now in its 15th year. This year it is going one better and part of it will continue for the rest of the week. WASH remains one of the longest weekend events which is now at risk. Clearly without the numbers needed to make the event viable it will struggle. What will keep it going is the determination and grit by Keith Israel. No-one can deny that after 40 years we will not miss the event. If everyone who went last year took one more person with them it would make a real difference. Over the years I have suggested that the committee consider changing the format. As time goes by people's needs change and of course there is a strong following from members who attend year after year.

Strangely Southern Area never considered changing its format of its weekend event to a week-long event. Only time will tell if it takes off, but they had to try.

Not forgetting the smaller groups who day in and day out run events for their members. Many are rewarded with the respect of their group and other group members who support their efforts.

Plus, many members at the grass level of the organisation who contribute so much.

As you will have noticed, the National membership has dropped by at least 50 in the past year. This is despite many groups stepping up their efforts to increase their social profile.

Equally pleasing to see many groups resuming activities from behind a pc screen and back to actual activities in pubs, holiday parks and entertainment venues.

What I cannot understand is why some members who volunteered to take on important posts in Plus lose heart during the year. Then at the following NAGM volunteer again. I just do not get it and I am told I cannot do anything they are volunteers. Yes no one can predict the future and we all have challenging times in our lives. But taking on a role year after year and treading water does no good for anyone, especially as I want to see Plus membership grow. To share all the special moments, I have been privilege to have enjoyed over the years. So please if you want to help to be part of Plus then remember it is a commitment that does need to be taken seriously.

During the past year I have, as promised, held National Executive Committee (NEC) meetings in all four areas. The idea was to give members from each area the chance to see the NEC in action. With the opportunity of a social event after the meeting. Social activities are the main foundation stone of Plus and it gave me a good indication of the strength of each area.

I especially would like to thank the members of Anglia and Southeast region for their very warm welcome and hospitality. Not only did I meet them in the evening but for breakfast in a member's home. Followed by a charity crazy golf competition.

One part of Plus that does bug me the most is the web presence for the National tier of plus. Repeatedly it frustrates me that we are losing a lost opportunity to consolidate our membership and increase it. Finally, we seem to be finally getting started by engaging a company called Site ground to build a website. If only we still had odd pictures of dogs and barbers. Below I have put the links mentioned,

New join landing page [Home \(plusgroups.org.uk\)](http://plusgroups.org.uk)

Dogs and Barbers [Home \(sg-host.com\)](http://sg-host.com)

Original website [National Federation of Plus Areas of Great Britain \(plusgroups.org.uk\)](http://plusgroups.org.uk)

In the past few days, I have noticed that some members have started to debate the future of the National Annual General meeting. One suggestion is to curtail the current format and hold them all online when there are less than 30 groups. Only to return to formal meetings when there are 30 or more groups. It was an interesting suggestion but then the argument was dispelled when a dinner & dance would take its place. Citing the cost of travel and accommodation was prohibitive for members for an AGM but not a dinner dance? Equally I was baffled by so many entries came forward after the deadline of the 21st of January 2024. Whilst I understand there will be some disappointment in the late entries not being considered. On the other hand, those members who did apply on time thank you. Please remember there is a reason we have deadlines. So, it gives the judges time to appraise all the entries of which some where many pages of words and pictures. Then meet up and discuss and decide on awarding them.

The last 12 months we have lost members including two from my own area who played a pivotal role in Southern Area and its committee.

Next year will be another challenging year for the next National Chairperson and their NEC.

I would like to thank Alison Cumber-Jones for her work on the National finances and her nonsense contribution to financial matters.

Equally to Erica Knight in her role as HGS and the irksome duty of the previous NAGM minutes.

Thank you for everyone who are attending the event or online. Let us have a positive meeting to rebuilt Plus.

Regards,

Steve

Steve Rolfe

National Chair.