

## Read Stuart Reddish's inaugural speech



Distinguished Presidents, Conference

When I stood for the DVP position some three years ago, I stood for the grass root members.

I would like to thank my branch and district for their support, in particular the district. They have always been fully behind me and for that I am truly grateful.

I would like to thank Andrew Taylor, Stephen Hunter, Gillian Jones and James Wilkinson, to name a few, for their unstinting support over the years.

I also want to recognise my good friends Roy Turnbull, Peter Stead and Barry Taylor. They have always supported me and kept me true. They have always believed in me and I hope to make them proud. I'm pleased to see Barry and Roy at conference to see this moment.

I am standing in front of you today with the opportunity to lead our new teams into a brighter and more optimistic future for the Federation.

I assure you, I will, as always, put members first and will stay loyal to my principles of being open and transparent even though some may find it unpalatable.

I am known for straight talking, I will deal with the inevitable challenges head on and, whilst I will not always get it right, I will listen to National Council and change my mind when convinced.

I don't mind being challenged as long as whoever is challenging can offer an alternative. It's all too easy to criticise, but not so easy to come up with a solution.

We have a great future but need everyone to pull together, including staff and officials. Now is the perfect time to rebuild the Federation and make it fit for purpose.

We have been talking about our challenges for long enough. It's now time for action. We have only one chance to get this right and, as we continue to celebrate our 100 years and look to the future, we owe it to everyone who has ever been involved in this great federation to succeed.

When I look to the side of me, I see past presidents who have given their best for the well-being of those they represent – collectively, they have over 2400 years of knowledge.

They come each year and listen to Presidents stand at this platform, like me, and deliver a speech. I want to make sure that next year, when I stand before them, I do so having achieved the Federation's aspirations and goals.

I would like to welcome the new NEC and National Councillors for 2019/2020.

As I indicated at spring council, I will be calling upon members who have specific skills to use their expertise in order to push the federation forward, even if they don't hold a position of national office.

As Earl Spencer said: "you don't have to have a title to be recognised and carry out good work".

As you now know we are in the final stages of the interview process for the two key positions of COO and Head of Business Development and I look forward to working closely and productively with them in my year as President.

To consolidate our vision of having everyone working more closely together, we have recently merged the Operations and News departments which has created what will be a very busy department.

I intend to hold one-to-one meetings with the NEC members and will announce the committees very soon thereafter.

Mike, the IPP, and myself are nearing our end as senior officials and we need to make sure that all the knowledge and expertise we have gained in our years of office is passed on to those who succeed us.

Of course, the federation will survive without us, but we are determined that it does more than survive.

Conference, many of you are district delegates, and as such, I want to remind you of your responsibility to hold your elected National Councillors to account. National Council also has a responsibility to hold the NEC and National President to account.

Our meetings need to be pro-active and productive, therefore I will be asking for suggestions and opinions at National Council and will expect elected officials to have taken the time to read the paperwork and be prepared for action.

All I ask is for National Councillors to be strong and embrace change. Be prepared to be bold and recognise that change is needed.

### **Compromise is not a dirty word**

My year will focus on working closely with the National Trustees, Finance Committee, NEC and staff. I know I cannot do it alone, but I also know there have been years of talk - now it's time for action.

It is essential that all staff know and understand what we do every day, the challenges we face and to recognise it's not easy being a retailer. All staff will have a small window of opportunity to do so as, during July and August, they will work alongside a retailer and see first-hand what we do.

I have spoken to your vice president and newly elected DVP and we are all on the same page - our aims and objectives are the same.

We have a business plan which will be discussed and actioned during our first NEC meeting. Once approved, it will be rolled out to National Council. We need to have a clear path and direction for all stakeholders.

**The NEC will focus on six main areas:**

1. member benefits /support
2. recruitment and retention
3. Retail Crime
4. engagement / publishers / wholesalers
5. assets of the federation
6. internal procedures

First and foremost, I've been privileged to head up and run the operations team and see first-hand how experienced and dedicated they are in providing our members with a lifeline and support through difficult times. I've also seen how they help develop stores and help members flourish in retail as well as keeping them legal. They are one of our biggest assets and this is what sets us apart from other Trade bodies, but we need to fully utilise their skills, provide them with essential tools and training to develop them further.

As a result of the restructure, we have appointed a senior RDM in the field to support our already dedicated field force, and will be bringing more benefits to members via the field force.

As you can see from the comments from members, the team really do make a difference.

[NFRN Connect](#) is another vital part of member contact and are the heart of the Federation. When telephoning our members, they have a great opportunity to promote the NFRN.

We have a highly skilled team who, over the years have gained the trust and respect of not only members but wholesale personal. I hope you met part of the team on the stands during this conference.

Every day they help members with issues which would otherwise go unresolved if it was not for the team.

They document these issues which this is vital when we are talking to wholesalers and publishers about our members concerns.

Since conference last year, we have saved members over £250,000. It is clear that not all members use this service and we need to move with the times and adopt new ways in which contact can be made which may include WhatsApp Groups, email, text and we are developing an app in order to keep our members informed - whatever our members need in this ever-changing world of retail.

Our membership services team are vital in making sure our democratic process is well oiled, but as branches and districts change, then so will the work of the dept. Business meetings are what the membership wants.

I'm pleased the motion to change branch meetings to business meetings passed and now we need to make them attractive to all independent retailers which should result in better attendance.

We currently have a five-star [legal policy](#) and we need to ensure that this is regularly evaluated and adapted to ensure it offers the service and support our members require. This is the single biggest external cost to the Federation and many of you will have had occasion to contact legal and benefit from this invaluable service.

We hope you all will by now have received your membership cards, every member will be given a card and we intend to use this as a platform for suppliers to offer great one-off, EXCLUSIVE deals to our members.

We have a diverse portfolio of retailers with different needs and we will look at offering a platform of silver, gold and platinum membership categories with additional benefits for extra commitment which suppliers can buy into.

I've long said that not every member wants a visit. Some simply want us as an insurance policy to dip in and out of when required.

Some members need one-to-one help which is something the Federation is extremely good at.

As members, we always want more, we want to see the [benefits of being a member](#) in real hard cash.

We all hear so often the quote "What does the federation do for me? Well, we really do a lot. The benefits alone cover the membership fee, but add in the money saved on the services available. It's a fantastic offering BUT we need to shout about our success.

Credit union is a great benefit as they support members when their requests for help have been rejected by the mainstream banks.

The Credit Union team has invested a lot of time in putting a new system in place to help members both save and obtain loans allowing them to invest in their businesses and develop even bigger, more profitable stores. This will be rolled out in the coming months.

## **Events**

I know sometimes it looks like officials are on “jollies” when you see photos at dinners and events. I want you to know such events are vital for two reasons:

1. to promote the federation
2. to network and do business

We also hold regional events with some success but we need to plan ahead and make sure we have the correct venue, times and be able to promote in a timely manner to give the event a fair chance of success. Afterwards, it essential that we monitor and evaluate to make future events more relevant to the needs of retailers.

Our [national awards](#) attracted over 450 people and was praised by the industry as the best event ever staged. This event was funded by the hard work of the News team, Business Development, Mike and myself and helped to raise the profile of the NFRN.

Retail crime is talked about along the corridors of Westminster and we need to continue to lead the debate and shape the way forward.

No member, in fact no one, should feel scared to provide for their family. We have heard so many stories of robberies and shop theft which is at its highest level in decades. 83% of staff experience verbal abuse, over 10k incidents of violence estimated this year and these are generally triggered by shop staff challenging shop theft, enforcing under age sales or refusing to serve a customer.

Crime ranges from shop theft to armed robbery with often tragic consequences. Staff assaults are at their highest level in decades and the impact can be devastating and long-lasting.

When Ravi from Pinner was killed in a quiet well-respected area whilst opening the store, it brings home how it could so easily have been anyone of us. The government and police need to act now and fast.

Our political engagement dept will work with communications to formulate a plan which outlines how, during my year of office, the NFRN will feature in the media and on TV to show government we have had enough.

Obviously, Brexit will dominate the political agenda, but we, as retailers, are still dealing with everyday issues which seem to fall on deaf ears.

Track and trace law is still causing concerns. Retailers are still unregistered and the ones who have made applications do not know where they stand in the process.

As the sole owner of Newtrade Publishing, which was purchased in order to benefit our membership, we need to work closely with them to make sure we both have a bright future. For so many years, this was not the case but that is all about to change.

We will have a new Business Development Manager and under their leadership I look forward to them bringing even more benefits to our members.

**We need a commercial offering**

Moving on to recruitment and retention - this is a key focus for the NFRN. As membership falls we need to stem the flow and add growth. Bev has outlined her vision, which we hope you all embrace, and look forward to our [members earning money for recruiting](#). I hope you had the chance to chat to her on the stand and in conference. If each member recruits just one additional member, Wow, what a difference it will make.

Everyone who is part of this federation should be able to sell the [Benefits of membership](#).

Now I want to turn to wholesaler and publisher issues. Members are faced with exorbitant carriage charges and now it's tipping the balance between being profitable or making a loss in news. Many retailers are now turning away from having news supplied direct from the wholesaler - Publishers and Wholesalers need to wake up and deal with this issue.

I intend to call a summit on this subject and invite leading publishers and wholesalers to have a frank and honest Debate.

[Newspro](#) is a way forward for many members and studies by the wholesaler show NFRN members out-perform non-members by 5%.

We have a huge amount of retailers taking part with now over 700 and growing, so if you haven't already signed-up, I urge you to do so as the figures speak for themselves. We are currently generating over £14m of revenue through Newspro. We have the winning formula to maximise profit when it comes to news.

Wholesale service levels fluctuate from region to region, branch to branch, but yet we still don't get auto restitution which in the 21 century is backwards and I am pleased that the motion regarding automatic restitution has passed. We need to challenge them on all fronts but also recognise we have to work along-side them to make sure our members are not treated unfairly and when they are, challenge them on it.

Smiths News is moving a small part of their call centre to India which should be monitored and evaluated. If successful, I'm sure will open up additional communication channels with our members.

The publishers continue to cause concern and although we have met on an unprecedented number of occasions, we still have issues about terms. Not all publishers have strong relationships with us, but when publishers do give us pro-rata terms, like the Guardian and Mail, we need to recognise this. However, I dread to think where the industry would be without the federation and the work the news team do to stop the coach and horses driving through our members shops.

Brian, Phil, Pete and Jerry lead the team and they continue to drive and deliver first class service in this challenging category.

When we look back at our 100 years history, some former Trustees made some very sound investments, none other than our head office in central London.

We now owe it to the membership to sweat the assets, so I can announce project awakening will commence in the quarter 3 and quarter 4. You will see from the pictures on the screen

what this building may look like in the future, but I am committed to working with the trustees and NEC in delivering a modern, money-making building during 2019.

We already rent out part of Yeoman House which produces a high rental income due to its favourable location.

Finally, now we have Bill Perry as Federation General Council and will work on procedures to protect members and staff.

Next year, we will bring rule changes to make our organisation more secure and less vulnerable to individuals who may want to take advantage.

Conference, the train is about to leave the station and I ask that we all jump aboard and embrace the change which is about to happen.

The last year has been exciting, disappointing, interesting and funny. This year will, I'm sure, bring challenges, but with the hard work of staff, official, NEC and its sub-committees, we will succeed.

Let's all work together, because, together we are stronger!

Thank you and I look forward to seeing many of you over this next year.