

Statement of Intent

by David HOLMAN

Incoming Chairman

Federation of Family History Societies

This statement is my personal view on what I would like to achieve in my time as Chairman of FFHS.

I am making it prior to the General Meeting as some of what I have to say will be relevant to what happens during the meeting and at subsequent meetings.

Firstly may I say that there are three courses open to FFHS

- We stay as we are.
- We move forward
- We cease to exist

I am confident that we share the same aim; I know I have an outright favourite but it is up to you and your own Committees where you want me to take the Federation. I can achieve any of them with your help and agreement.

Please just think about the three options and keep thinking of them throughout my statement, at the General Meeting and please take these options back to your societies.

I intend to pursue a policy of open governance within FFHS.

This will be achieved initially by a change in the way the Executive Meetings are run.

At the start of every meeting there will be an open session where representatives of our members may be in attendance and they will have an opportunity to ask questions.

If an immediate answer is required it would be useful if a copy can be sent to the Administrators in advance so that the relevant officer can investigate and prepare an answer. This is not a requirement but will make an immediate answer more likely

Where possible the questions will be answered directly at the meeting but in the event that the Executive Committee are unable to do so, the representative will be sent an acknowledgement of the question and a copy of any answer if given within 24 hours. If the committee are unable to answer within 24 hours they will report back within seven days of the initial acknowledgement. This will continue until an answer has been given.

The answer will be from the FFHS Executive and hopefully will be to the satisfaction of the representative and their society, but this cannot be guaranteed.

After the open forum, the representative is welcome to attend the remainder of the meeting except where it is deemed necessary to close certain parts of that meeting.

Expenses for travel to the meeting will be borne by the society being represented and that society should approve such representation and as a matter of courtesy let the Joint Administrators know who is attending. Where a large number of attendees is forecast a change of venue may be needed.

From time to time the Executive Committee may invite a society representative or other person with special knowledge to a meeting. In this case costs will be borne by the FFHS.

In all cases after the open forum the representative may not take further active part or contribute to discussion except by invitation from the chair of the meeting.

This has been agreed in principle by the Executive and will be placed into our rules and procedures for meetings. The first meeting where this will be in place is the Executive meeting on 19 April 2008 at the Sekforde Arms in Clerkenwell, London.

It is also hoped that minutes of meetings subject to approval will be placed in a new 'Members' Only' section of the website but as yet this has not been formally approved.

As your Chairman I intend to improve communications between the FFHS and its members

Communication is a two way process it involves talking and listening.

I would ask everyone to listen to what is said either at meetings or in emails, policies, statements etc and comment back immediately if you have questions or things that you do not understand, please do not wait until a GM to raise them, there are 363 other days in the year when we can listen and where necessary take the appropriate action.

It is, I consider, a fundamental responsibility, that Trustees of this Charity take responsibility for their decisions and actions and explain them to the Member Societies of the FFHS.

I want the FFHS Executive to set an example of 'Best Practice' in their work and will undertake to improve and streamline our meetings and our own internal communications. This will give our member societies a 'Benefit of Membership' in that our own (volunteer) time will be better spent to greater effect.

On the subject of Benefits of Membership I wish to state that this is a major priority for me over the coming year and I hope that we can better explain and justify how the Federation can be an increased benefit to societies.

I stood up at an open meeting in London in 2006 and questioned these very things, as a result I am here before you now. Please if you have questions or special skills that can help improve what we do, let me know, there are still vacancies on the Executive Committee but I expect them to fill fairly quickly.

You will see from the reports that have been circulated that the FFHS have had an eventful year and many of the things promised have been achieved. This is still not good enough for me and I would like to meet all of our promises and ensure that future promises are achievable within the time allotted to them. I have personally been involved in a couple of these achievements, as FFHS Education Officer, and I hope you will see this as an example of my commitment to the Federation and its aims

When I took over as Chairman of Cornwall FHS some years ago I found myself in a similar position vis a vis a new online service. I want this service to work and to be a benefit to our

members and family historians. This benefit will be both financial and enjoyable in that revenue will be raised for the Federation and its members and family historians will be better able to expand their family trees.

On the subject of revenue and funding I wish you to note that the subject of increased subscriptions is an item on the agenda for this meeting. As someone who is a member of a number of large societies, I know how much this has caused comment.

Another area where we have been remiss in the realisation of a promise is the subject of the Business Plan. I understand that this matter will be raised during the meeting and again welcome discussion at that point.

I have produced a simple plan under the title 'Business Plan'; this is in no way a full and formal plan, simply a statement of what we have done and where we are going. I promise to you now that there will be a full and formal business plan with full, accurate and budgeted financial details. I also hope that we can continue updating the plan with your help.

You will see from my CV that I am from a military background and indeed still serve as an officer with the reserve forces, this is in fact the basis of my full time work. I have to juggle my FFHS commitments with work and three other hobbies that I am also passionate about. This is no mean feat but rest assured that my heart is with the Federation and I will fully support it and you.

Finally on the good military premise that after any presentation or speech only the last three facts will be remembered I leave you with these three pieces of information and ask you to write them all down now.

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