

Dear Members,

I trust this finds you and your families safe and well.

I wanted to update you on what is happening within the Association during these challenging and unprecedented times and appraise you of some of the facts behind how we are managing the Association both now and for the future.

The Side Saddle Association take seriously their responsibility to contribute towards the containment and control of COVID-19 and fully support the Government recommendations around social distancing, non-essential travel and public gatherings. The Association therefore requested that no SSA activities take place until further notice and this remains our stance. Additionally, it is with much regret the Association has made the difficult decisions to cancel the International Weekend planned for May and the National Show scheduled for August.

The SSA is mainly funded by membership income, membership has been falling over the last few years and to date in 2020 the member numbers are down 8.5 % year on year and with COVID-19 and the subsequent cancellation of activities and shows the impact will be felt by us all. There is an element of fixed costs each month including honorariums and insurance. Our Hon. Gen. Secretary has voluntarily reduced her working time by 5 hours per week for the next 3 months and the Treasurer is managing her time dealing with essential tasks only, this arrangement will be reviewed as the year progresses. To date we have paid out for Handbooks, Points Cards, Shows & Fixtures Booklet, February Council meeting, AGM documents including voting papers, Judges Packs and the Spring/Summer Newsletter which will be circulated shortly (for those of you who have opted for online correspondence this still represents a cost in terms of the compilation of electronic documents and the circulation of them), additionally there is the cost of general correspondence, postage, telephone and website costs etc,etc.

At present we really don't know when activities can resume and therefore may get some membership renewals and new member applications coming in. Council will look at ways we may be able to mitigate membership costs for 2020 members going into 2021, I assure you we will do the best we can however the financial position we are in may not allow for this. You will understand we are a small, niche, not for profit organisation with amateur rider members and a reliance on the goodwill and support of volunteers (many of whom are currently classed as vulnerable), to promote and encourage the elegant art of side saddle and preserve it for generations to come.

Please stay safe and well and rest assured Council will be doing all they can to keep the Association active and will support the resuming of events as soon as the Government issues further instruction and guidance.

Vanessa Hood
Chairman – The Side Saddle Association