

Directors report to members

The year so far has been challenging the pressures on household bills and the continuing increases in raw material costs has had a negative effect on sales overall. Consumers are more cautious with their spending and the society has not been immune to these issues. We have had to make difficult choices during the past nine months, the closures of the clothing department in Penrith and the Packhorse Court project in Keswick were unavoidable. Neither were contributing and both were disappointingly loss making. Alongside this a review of the Burrowgate store was undertaken and some valued staff were released due to the need to control our overheads and remain competitive.

On a positive note the increase in sales floor given to home furnishings has been well received and sales have been buoyant. The integration of our cook shop into the ground floor sales area where the food hall had been stretched to fill the available space has improved the overall sales per square feet of that area. The food department has not lost any of its original range due to this move.

The society stores continue to offer good quality service to our members and this is borne out by the letters of support that we receive from time to time expressing members appreciation of store staff making a difference and turning shopping into a pleasurable experience. Feedback from our staff and members allows us to make changes that are beneficial to all parties for example at Stanhope it took a while to get the checkout area right for the volume of trade and we would like to thank our staff for their input in getting this right.

Your directors along with some of our neighbouring society directors have been undergoing training to enhance their knowledge of co-operation and of co-operative values and principles as well as updating their skills in the governance and management of the society. Working with other societies allows us to share common issues and also present a united front for independent co-operatives.

We would like to express our thanks to our members, our management and staff for their loyalty and hard work which often seems to go unnoticed but is appreciated.