

I have the pleasure of presenting my report for the year 2015/2016.

National Committee

Your National Committee has met twice in 2015. It is clear that trading is still tough for many companies and several members have decided to reduce the number of trade fairs that they attend as they feel that there are not enough new buyers attending; other topics discussed by your National Committee are legislation and the future of the Association as well as new services and benefits.

Trade Fairs

We have exhibited at two trade fairs, Autumn Fair 2015 and Spring Fair 2016 but have also visited Top Draw, Pure, MODA, and Home & Gifts. There were several complaints during the Spring Fair of stands and product being photographed by other exhibitors which is not allowed. Some members spend a lot of time and money in designing new products for each season. It is bad enough when they find that they have been copied in the country of manufacture but having fellow exhibitors blatantly taking photos is one step too far. The JDA had discussions with the organisers who duly carried out a stand drop with 'No Photography' signs and information reiterating their 'no photography' policy. These discussions are on-going.

Membership/Future of the Association

Despite our best efforts, membership has declined slightly this year, mainly through companies not exhibiting at certain trade fairs and therefore not receiving the rebates or discounts. They fail to see the benefit of the legal protection insurance which is costly and which is already included in the membership subscription; plus there are many benefits and services which have been specifically designed to save money or enhance members' businesses. Clearly, we cannot go on losing members and your National Committee is looking at what we can do in the future to continue serving members whilst reducing costs.

Regulation

While new and developing legislation is on-going there has been nothing of technical significance this year although there has been other general legislation, particularly in employment, not least the National Living Wage which is due to come into force in April 2016. The other burden on our members is that every employee must be offered a pension scheme which will tie up a lot of management time for our members which comprise mainly small companies.

Publicity for Members

We continue to produce our monthly newsletter and members are welcome to send press releases to us which we are happy to feature. The newsletter up-dates members on new services and benefits, new legislation and trade fair information but it is always good to feature members and their products and their news generally so please add us to your press list.

Vote of Thanks

I would like to thank members for their support during the year; our representative to the Federation's Board of Directors, Sangat Chandhok, and my National Committee for their tremendous support; our Manager, Lynn Snead for her hard work and commitment to the industry.

JOHN MILLIGAN
Chairman