

Chairman's Report for 2009 AGM

During the last year the Board, staff and volunteers have all worked hard to improve the MSPCA and its work with animals. One of the main challenges has been to improve our facilities whilst balancing this against our income. The main source of income has been in the form of gifts and legacies. This by its very nature is unpredictable; all too often larger charities get the lion's share of such income. Therefore we continue to work hard to improve our public profile and ultimately increase legacy income.

Over the years members have suggested other ways of earning income. One such suggestion was the boarding of dogs; the current kennels were designed with this in mind. The gross income from dog boarding is approx £33,000 per year. A boarding cattery is another suggestion which is being investigated. Members may also recall the suggestion to run a charity shop. Until recently, finding a suitable location with an affordable rent and recruiting sufficient volunteers to cover the opening hours for six days a week appeared impossible.

In the last three months we have been able to open such a charity shop after the kind and generous offer made by Rosie Clucas and Rosie Richmond who have set up our shop on Peel Road. This operation has been successful and is providing new funds. It is highly dependent on these two ladies and to date sickness and holiday cover have been provided by two Board Members. We do, however, need more volunteers to help with the shop and would welcome any offers of support! We would welcome suggestions for other locations, but please bear in mind that good locations usually command high rents.

Those of you that have visited our new website www.mspca.im will have noticed significant changes since last year with regular updates taking place. We are indebted to Alice O'Brien for volunteering to take on the task of designing and running the website, and I also take this opportunity to thank all those involved in the improvements. Carolyn Main, Board Member, is working particularly hard in this area to ensure that the wording on the website gets the right message across to those visiting the site. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank her for her excellent work on the newsletters. This, together with the website has gone some way to lift our public profile which will, hopefully, increase our income.

The Board has always been concerned about our isolated position here in the Island and has been keen to learn of 'best practice' in the UK and further afield. To this end we joined the Association of Dog and Cat Homes (ADCH), whose members include Battersea Dogs & Cat Home, Dogs Trust, Cat Protection and the RSPCA. Our membership has enabled our staff and Board Members to attend conferences in order to improve our knowledge about current developments.

This year's ADCH conference took place in Ireland and was attended by two members of staff. Among a wide agenda a speaker from America gave a very interesting report on animal abuse and methods of countering it in the USA.

Last October, Lyn Renshaw, MSPCA Manager and Georgina MacLaurin, Board Member, attended The International Companion Animal Welfare Conference in Italy. This was the first time that representatives from the Society have attended an international conference. The conference proved to be invaluable in a number of areas, in particular, a presentation made by Mr Alex Darvill of Agora Management. Agora Management have 15 years of experience in designing and building shelters for rescue centres throughout the UK e.g. The Dogs Trust, Jersey S.P.C.A, Guernsey S.P.C.A. and the Scottish S.P.C.A.

As you are, no doubt, aware we have a less than ideal site with unfinished works and lack of maintenance to existing structures which has been primarily down to a lack of finance and suitable expertise within the Island. Projects have been pared back to save money, with the intention of returning to these projects when finances permit. Therefore, we invited Mr Darvill to visit and produce a survey report on our current facilities with suggestions on improvements. We are grateful to Mr Darvill for his time and expertise in producing this report at no charge to the Society other than his travelling costs.

We have drawn up a list of projects which we call our “5 year plan”. The following list reflects the order of current priorities. We intend to review these regularly and, if necessary, reprioritise them:

- 1 Soundproofing and insulation of kennels and erection of a dog isolation building
- 2 Erection of multipurpose dog building
- 3 Surfacing of extended car park with Tarmac
- 4 Completion of large seal pool
- 5 Reinstatement of nature trail
- 6 Replacement cattery

Naturally it is in all our interests to ensure that we keep a 3 ½ year “cushion” of funds for the continuation of the MSPCA’s survival before undertaking any projects.

We have recently been offered the sum of £50,000 towards a new build project and had hoped to put before you a resolution for a capital sum for a new multipurpose dog building alongside the existing kennels. We believe this building would offer better opportunities to help the dogs get re-homed more quickly by continuing their training/socialising under cover particularly when the weather is inclement! We are in contact with Mr Darvill and hope he will be able to help us prepare the structured drawings, specification and contract conditions for us to put the job out to tender.

Can I urge you all to come along to the AGM and participate in your Society? We always need your help and support. If you are unable to attend, please feel free to contact myself on 823682 or e-mail at wpcubbon@manx.net or any Board Member on any issue that concerns you.

Bill Cubbon, Chairman.