

THE SPEAKER

Autumn 2020



A WORD

FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to the latest edition of The Speaker, an edition that on any version of events has been brought together in an extraordinary era. An era where we've all had to learn a new way of being.

There's no doubt that this has been challenging at times, but it's also been interesting. We have a new Speakers Guide, a new website and an invigorated social media presence. If you haven't come across it yet, we have a private ASC Facebook Group page just for members. We also have public facing Facebook and LinkedIn pages and are in the process of refreshing our YouTube channel. Please join the Facebook group to join in the conversations that are taking place there and like our pages. Your club Facebook page can also like the ASC page which is all good promotion of us all. The links are below.

All of which made it seem right that we embraced a new era for The Speaker. I'm only here as Acting Editor for now, and we have a new editorial team in the wings waiting to take over. With a view to saving money and improving quality and efficiency, The Speaker will now be a digital magazine which you'll find on the website.

Finally, as the ASC gets to grip with life AC (After COVID), there is much work to be done. A virtual AGM will be taking place in November when there will be important decisions to be made. All the details of these are included in these pages, so please take a moment to digest all that's going on.

And finally, finally! I know many at the ASC would like to acknowledge the enormous hard work and dedication of our outgoing editor Margaret Robertson. The fact that she is being replaced by an entire team says something about the work she has put in over the years. Thank you, Margaret.

I hope you enjoy this edition and manage to "Stay Safe" during the months ahead.

Lucy Pitts

Please bear in mind, this is your magazine and to a great extent, we rely on you for your contributions – both written and photographic. For now, any contributions can be sent to national.development.officer@speakersclubs.uk.

ASC FB Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/speakersclubs>

ASC FB Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/AssociationofSpeakersClubs>

ASC LinkedIn Page:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/associationofspeakersclubs>

CONTENTS

5	Thoughts from the National President
6	Notice of General Council Meeting Position Vacant - National Development Officer
7	Your guide to the Proposed Changes at the ASC
12	The new Speakers Guide... and more!
13	From humble beginnings... speaker to National Finalist Stephen Dance shares his experience
14	Introducing Michael Cox and the next generation. Interview by Catherine Williamson
16	Processes and communications. Anna Tewson explains how Horsham Speakers Club went from decline to success
18	Advice from Parliament! Dr Luke Evans MP for Bosworth spills the beans
20	How to rebuild or as Boris might say, build back better
22	News & Achievements
24	In Memoriam

THOUGHTS FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT TONY SCOTT



I never believed that I would still be your National President at this time or that I would have visited so many places without leaving my house. I am also sure you have all thought this but why didn't I invest in Zoom in February.

Across the Association I would like to thank all those who invited me to meetings and apologise to all those clubs I failed to attend. In my travels, I experienced an enthusiasm to embrace and use new technology, and I experienced innovative ways of making speeches, evaluations and educational presentations.

An example of this was at Denny SC where a member used the share screen facility to present an education section on how to use PowerPoint, and at this club all education sessions were recorded and used as a resource for members at a future time.

Innovations in evaluation have also been applied. In one club, the process of evaluation was divided up into separate parts and members were allocated that element for the night, e.g. vocabulary. That member then evaluated everyone under the heading vocabulary, while another member would be concentrating on gestures, etc. This was a different and effective way of getting members to focus on just one element, and I feel that over time, this could aid members, giving a route map or structure to the process of evaluation.

I have also been treated to a range of speeches. I know some members expressed concerns that some of our manual speeches could not be achieved on Zoom, but my personal feeling is that this is not true. I agree it is sometimes harder, but I still believe achievable. For example, with eye contact, as long as the speaker knows where their camera is located and the evaluator "pins" the speaker, eye contact can be seen to be achieved.

The quality of General Evaluations I feel has improved by using this new technology, and a great example of a General Evaluation was done by Chris Robertson at his first zoom meeting.

Generally, I have been overjoyed by the enthusiasm of the members to keep engaging and practicing our art, the increased engagement with Facebook and the ideas for speeches or topics have been wonderful. This technology has also saved money for the ASC with NEC and District meetings being held on this media.

The NEC team has been working hard to ensure that when we get back to more normal meetings, we will have the tools and information we need, like a new Speakers Guide, a functioning and effective website, a publication which engages with the members and potential new members. I cannot thank the members of this committee enough for the work they have carried out.



NOTICE OF GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING

To all voting members of the General Council.

Your attendance is requested at the 49th Annual General Council Meeting to be held virtually via Zoom meetings on Saturday 28 November at 1400 hours.

The final agenda will be sent to members by 30 October and the Zoom meeting details will be made available by 21 November.

By order of the National Executive Committee.

Paul Taylor

National Secretary
Association of Speakers Clubs
2 October 2020

POSITION VACANT - NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Late in 2019, James McGinty stepped down as our National Development Officer and on behalf of the NEC and wider ASC, would like to thank him for his service and input into the affairs for the ASC during his time in office.

Margaret Robinson, our current Editor at the time had also advised that after a few years' excellent service, she was going to step down after the February 2020 issue of the magazine had been issued. Again, on behalf of the NEC and wider ASC, can I thank her for her service during her time in office.

With the development of the new website, the need to take our social media and member communication on to the next level, we needed to make a casual appointment to assist the NEC deliver on its commitments to the membership.

In February, we approached Lucy Pitts, Club President at Horsham DC, who is an award-winning copy writer to assist the NEC on a Casual Appointment, to deliver our goals.

We had a plan in place and then along comes a global pandemic, which meant we had to evolve our plans to meet the new environment and speaker meetings.

Lucy assisted in getting our old website address back, has delivered our new website, has improved the style of our all member emails, has increased the number of members on our closed social media groups, started working on our open social media groups to raise the ASC profile and obtain new members.

As you will also see, she has issued a few guides and information to help our Clubs during this strange landscape caused by the Corona Virus.

On behalf of the NEC and wider ASC, I thank her for her fantastic work as an exceptional National Development Officer.

As we approach the AGM in November it is time to formally advertise for the role on a permanent basis and I would ask that anyone interested in applying for the role should contact me via email with a CV at national.secretary@speakersclubs.uk by midnight 31st October.

The role of the National Development Officer is described in the Constitution as:

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

- perform the duties incident to the office,
- further the development of the Association by methods approved by the NEC,
- undertake such other duties as the NEC may prescribe,
- be Chairman of the Development Committee.

About as useful as a chocolate tea pot. So it is fit for the 21 Century.

So, here is a more appropriate list and it is not exhaustive, noting that we expect to see excellent project management skills and is based on the current ASC set up:

- Lead the development of our social media, member communications and website
- Seek support from a number of members across all Districts to assist with the above
- New member growth strategy
- Support the NEC to develop its strategy
- Develop a new job description

Please also include with your CV your strategy and operational plans to deliver new member growth for the ASC over the next three years and it is this aspect that will form a major part of your interview.

Now, you might feel that you are not ready to take on the lead role, but you have some specialist skills that would support the National Development Officer, don't be shy, please contact me, using the above email address.

Paul Taylor

National Secretary

YOUR GUIDE TO THE PROPOSED CHANGES AT THE ASC

As your incoming National President my focus and indeed my expertise is around the necessity to stabilise our Association, retain our members and grow our clubs.

The motion that I am going to expand upon, which we were going to consider in Manchester, would have been far reaching and regarded as perhaps revolutionary. But COVID, lockdown and Zoom have proved to be a game changer for the Association and indeed our World. What has been unequivocally proven is when required, we adapted, because we had to. It has been incredible to see the connectivity emerging between Clubs, the sharing of best practice and the ability to “attend” another Club’s meeting hundreds of miles away.

What we’re seeking to do as a leadership team is to put a framework together that will allow us to bring around a meaningful transformation. Not only will we be fitter and more agile for the future, but better still, we’ll be able to grow, become attractive and more accessible to a whole new pool of potential members that can really benefit from what we do.

We are ideally suited and placed to appeal to and support people who have lost jobs; people who have been furloughed; those who have had a loss of confidence and are in need of a fresh look at their skills. And we need to remain familiar enough to our existing members, whilst still keeping on track towards a path of growth and resurgence.

Under the leadership of Tony Scott, we have a new website, a new Speakers’ Guide, a soon-to-be digital Magazine and a whole other host of guides produced to support the growth and development of our clubs at a grassroots level.

The NEC is following a 3 year plan that was the vision of the Past National President Jackie Mafi. Jackie has been a fantastic visionary, phenomenal grafter and tremendous servant to the Association. Tony, in Year 2, has been a

progressive, bold leader who has grasped the nettle. I want to build on their momentum and the motion to implement the ASC Change and Improvement Process, I believe, is going to equip us to do just that.

We’re not professing to have all the answers yet. However, so that we can ensure that when we come to vote, we have the chance of being on the same page, there has been a huge consultation process over a long period of time including a number of Zoom presentations (recordings available – see below) and refinements made as a result of member feedback.

Presentation recordings and zoom presentation meetings

The new Speakers Guide (Tom Scott) - <https://www.facebook.com/SpeakerUK/videos/10157059539342001>

The new ASC website (Lucy Pitts) - <https://www.facebook.com/SpeakerUK/videos/10157091659377001>

Presidential terms and growth strategy (Catherine Williamson, Tony Scott, and Jackie Mafi) <https://www.facebook.com/SpeakerUK/videos/10157123431922001/>

Boundaries and Management (Tom Scott and Malcolm McKechnie) <https://www.facebook.com/SpeakerUK/videos/10157151730362001>

The new Constitution and Rules (Jackie Mafi, Joe James, and Verity Eunson Hickey) <https://www.facebook.com/SpeakerUK/videos/10157184138752001/>

One Member One Vote (Paul Taylor and Catherine Williamson) <https://www.facebook.com/SpeakerUK/videos/10157212508667001>

It has been incredible to see the connectivity emerging between Clubs



Our Constitution did the job 50 years but is no longer agile enough to allow us to respond quickly

The proposal

The motion to be proposed at the November AGM is the culmination of three years of planning and consultation. Below is a quick overview.

We have pulled together a number of frequently asked questions but this is by no means an exhaustive list.

What is the motion?

These are the elements of the motion requiring the support of voting delegates at the ASC National AGM in November:

- Moving from a club representative to a “One Member One Vote” system – massively increasing the decision making giving everyone a stake in the Association beyond their own Club
- Increasing terms for the National President and National Vice President to two years, discontinuing the post of Immediate Past National President – stronger strategic thinking, higher quality leadership and more stable succession planning
- Reorganising the ASC from 8 Districts and 25 areas to 6 Regions and 18 areas – simplifying the structure, requiring almost 100 fewer volunteers on committees, activity focussed on sustainable initiatives at club, inter-club and area level
- New constitution and rules written in plain English as far as possible and produced to support all the other changes and improvements

Why do we need to change when some of our clubs are flourishing?

Yes, we have areas of the Association that are flourishing but an alarming number of clubs are going into abeyance. See below

Year	Clubs Lost from Previous Year	Total ASC Membership	New Clubs Formed
2017	Bolton & District, East Kilbride, Kirkintilloch, Renfrew	1,273	Bromsgrove Nomura
2018	Clarkston, Redditch & District, Tameside Ladies	1,216	
2019	Shepshed, Cockermouth, South Manchester, Isle of Bute, Warrington	1,220	BAE Sector Financial Conduct Auth
2020	Burntisland, City West, Dundee, Garstang, Nairn, Preston, White Rose (North Leeds)	1,089	Porthcawl

It's great if you're in a flourishing club. But those clubs who are constantly teetering on the brink, trying to change their fortunes and are in a battle for survival, have a very different experience. We need to reach out to them. We were once a glorious 3,500 strong membership but we are now around 1100, contracting year on year, losing over 100 members last year alone. All of this was prior to COVID and we await to see how well we'll rise out of this. Under the current structure it requires more than 400 roles to be filled; our structure may have worked in our golden days but for today's membership of 1100, we are evidently top heavy.

Our Constitution did the job 50 years but is no longer agile enough to allow us to respond quickly, when faced with that cocktail of compliance: GDPR, Safeguarding and Social Media only a few examples. Though it is indeed 'unprecedented', the pandemic has thus exposed our constitutional inflexibility. Finally, every National President always gives the same feedback at the end of their year: "By the time I figured out the job I was leaving it". This notion undoubtedly hampers strategic planning and the driving through of new initiatives.

*Simplified
capitation,
improved
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and reduced costs
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money.*

How will this motion make a difference?

- **Increase involvement** – "One Member One Vote" means everyone gets a stake in the Association. Voting will take place prior to the AGM using digital platforms so that when we gather, we can be both future thinking and more focused. The mechanism for debating will take place in advance of the AGM as will the shaping of the motions. The AGM and voting structure have the potential to be hijacked by individual agendas, rather than representing the interests of the whole voice of the Association. Citrine has its origins in local government, parliament and trade unions and at its finest, it is there to give everyone a democratic say. However, in recent years, the knowledge of Citrine, understood by a small few, has been used to derail and confuse the debate. On occasions, this has certainly exasperated a majority of attendees. This makes AGMs often something to be dreaded and endured, rather than an informative, constructive occasion in which we drive forward progress.
- **Improve communication** – it's a two-way street. Direct communication from the National President to every single club member and equally, back again. Whilst we use the medium of the newsletter and the ASC Facebook page, in reality, the mechanism of cascading the information through the chain of command still leaves members with the impression they are not communicated with effectively.
- **Clarify roles** – at present, everyone understands and knows their club. Some, by no means everyone, are aware of their Area whilst the NEC is regarded as a remote (perhaps irrelevant) body that most aren't even aware exists. We need to sharpen this up; every member belongs to the Association as a whole. The NEC will be an arm of strategic governance, ensuring the big concepts and ideas are managed with an eye to the future. Clubs and Areas, meanwhile, will act as the engine rooms of growth.
- **Simplified Structure** – By removing up to 100 committee positions, by reducing the number of Areas and having a single Regional Coordinator, we can be more agile and less consumed with post filling and more focussed on growth and development.
- **Create space for innovation** – A slicker AGM and reduced number of national contestants. Allowing more education and participation events like storytelling, applied speaking, debating, speaker's marketplace etc. and let's not forget 'Zoom' and the like as we have been forced to embrace new ways of working and technological platforms.
- **Shorter Conference** – I think it's good to be reminded we are in the education and entertainment business. When people attend Conference, it is a significant financial commitment, and we owe it to all attendees to give them the best experience possible. A slick and purposeful AGM and a showcase of our Association in contests will be far more attractive to young and old alike.
- **Save you money** – Simplified capitation, improved administration and reduced costs will save you money. As of 1st January 2022, if we are an ASC of 6 regions, all members will pay a £2.50 regional capitation.
- **Reduce ASC costs** – Reduced costs from having two fewer NEC members and six fewer national contestants. There will be no 'voting delegate' expenses for National Conference due to 'One Member One Vote'.

FAQ's

When does the new structure start if passed at conference?

1st June 2021.

Will the current districts lose their money in the new structure?

No. The NEC has no intention of plundering the funds from the old District accounts. Under the auspices of the new Regional Coordinator, with the support of a local or the National Treasurer, the money will stay put or the National Treasurer would hold the pot for each Region and the Regional Co-ordinator would draw upon that pot as required.

What will happen with future Regional fees?

As of 1st January 2022, if we are an ASC of 6 regions, all members will pay a £2.50 regional capitation. The membership total per area will determine the amount of regional money allocated to that area.

What will the regional coordinator now do in their role?

Organise the regional AGM and Contest, be part of the NEC and facilitate grassroots communication.

What is the recruitment process for the regional coordinator?

The current District Presidents will be approached to see if they are happy to take up the new post. Scotland will have three DPs merging into one new Region so interviews will be arranged. Where no existing DP is in post, interviews will be arranged and appointments made with representatives from that region and the NEC.

If it makes so much sense why have we not done it before?

Because we only vote once a year, all progress is held up. If the motion gets voted down, we have to wait another year. Technological improvements mean that nearly all our members can receive an email and in the past, when we were without that connectivity, we were thwarted.

What chance is there going to be to debate motions/ideas and make changes where required?

What should happen at the moment is that there should be rigorous debate at club level. Your voting delegate should then vote in accordance with the wishes of the club membership. In reality, voting delegates often go to Conference with no idea what they're voting on or the significance of the motions. Those with intimate knowledge of Citrine, have the potential to sway the debate. Voting Delegates can vote simply on their own agenda without any redress to their clubs, which can lend itself to being undemocratic.

Those with intimate knowledge of Citrine, have the potential to sway the debate

THE NEW SPEAKERS GUIDE... AND MORE!



After three years of feedback from members across the ASC, I set out with a team of contributors, editors, and advisers to rewrite the Speakers Guide. After two rounds of open feedback from members by Zoom and email, and targeted feedback from NEC, corporate clubs, non-ASC members and previous National Educational Directors, we arrived at draft version 8 that is now ready to go to our design partner. Alongside this new guide, a range of supplementary tools have been created and work on a brand-new website is complete. Please find below a summary of all the work:

- **The Speakers Guide** – Completely re-imagined 50 page guide (down from almost 250), contains all the updates and improvements from the last six years, is structured under “Better Speaker, Better Presenter, and Better Leader”, and will be professionally designed and printed.
- **Suite of 1-page tools** – Several resources have been produced to support the new Speakers Guide. There is the “Public Speaking Cheat Sheet!” for the first assignment, “ASC Speech Construction Guidance” for the second, “Body Talk” for use of gestures and “Using Language Creatively” for vocabulary and word pictures.
- **Materials from old guide** – The “Further Assignments” for advanced speakers, evaluation advice, general evaluation template and other information is being transferred to the new WordPress based website which is currently being finalised.
- **Evaluation Forms** – All updated to reflect the improvements that came out of member engagement with the “National Conversation on Evaluation”. A greater focus on practical advice, more evaluation process options, and more flexibility for the evaluator in how they effectively analyse the speech and speaker.
- **Record of Achievement** – A new resource designed to help members capture their

accomplishments. This tool should also allow members to reflect on progress and reassess their learning and development goals.

- **Contest Improvements Finalised** – All contest rules and guidance documents have been updated, Chief Judge and Timekeeper contest sheets have been revised and a new ‘Notice and Appeals Procedure’ has been created.
- **Speaking of Impact** – This is a new resource designed to allow members running any kind of event (online or offline) to capture evidence of change. Drawing on best practice and creative approaches, it allows anyone to engage in effective self-evaluation for gathering impact evidence and learning from what works.
- **New WordPress based website** – All the new and updated electronic resources will be housed on a professionally designed and completely accessible website. This work has been delivered by your National Vice President Catherine Williamson, National Secretary Paul Taylor, and your new National Development Officer Lucy Pitts.

The one difficulty in all of this has been communicating a clear timeline to members. This is because of the Covid situation leading to the postponement of National Conference. This has in turn prevented us from completing the ASC reorganisation process (boundaries, leadership terms, member involvement and constitution). We will be coming to members again to discuss all the above across Facebook, Zoom, LinkedIn, the Speaker Magazine, and Email.

It is becoming clear that we will not be getting back to normal anytime soon. This is a difficult time for members and for the ASC but it can be the start of growth that our change journey has been working towards. One of the amazing things I have picked up on is a renewed sense of community in the ASC... a connection to the group and to each other. That is something that we can build on and we now have the tools to do it.

Thomas Scott, National Education Director

<https://speakersclubs.wordpress.com/>

Twitter: @ASC_Education

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS... SPEAKER TO NATIONAL FINALIST

STEPHEN DANCE SHARES HIS EXPERIENCE



In February 2010 I was asked to do something which filled me with dread and fear; I was asked by my brother to be the best man at his wedding!

I could hardly refuse yet the thought of it was terrifying. I was a solicitor and solicitors are meant

to be confident, eloquent and proficient speakers. However, I was a property solicitor so had no court experience except as a 17-year-old saying to the magistrate "Guilty Sir, I am very sorry and promise not to do it again!"

I had to do something, but what? Serendipitously an internet search revealed that Newport Speakers Club had just been formed and was based only 12 miles from my house!

I vividly recall the first time I went and did my "Icebreaker"; I was nervous, sweating, shaking and spoke far too quickly.

Months later after delivering a couple of speeches and doing lots of Topics, I managed to successfully give a decent best man's speech and even got a few laughs.

What I found with the club is that it is such a supportive environment. My first speech was rather poor, but the evaluator was kind and sympathetic pointing out the positive aspects of my speech and gently giving a few recommendations for improvement. This attitude was crucial, it is so easy to dent someone's confidence with harsh and critical comments.

As my confidence grew, I plucked up the courage to enter competitions and eventually found myself at an Area competition. I was not placed and was overawed by the standard of the better speakers, but rather than being intimidated I took note and resolved to try and become as good as them.

My first success led to me being District Topics winner in 2012 and I competed in the National

Conference in Cardiff. That really was terrifying, and I will never forget walking out into the auditorium and facing what looked like thousands of faces.

The Topic was "Raising the Bar". I managed to speak for the full 3 minutes but it was less a speech than a torrent of words spewing forth like a waterfall. My eyes were focused on the ceiling and I did not stop to draw breath. I was not placed but was an amazing experience!

After that, I entered every competition I could and still do. I love competitions but also as a spectator as well as a participant. I find them inspiring and exciting.

I have appeared at the National on several occasions with mixed success. Once in a speech competition my microphone came off my lapel and most of the audience could not hear me. I have managed to come 2nd in the Speech competition twice and 2nd in the Topics competition twice. It would have been great to win but on every occasion I was beaten by a better speaker.

I still get apprehensive before speaking in competitions but these days the nerves are beneficial as they generate energy once I start speaking.

I have been invited to speak many times to other organisations such as the Freemasons, Women's Guild, several schools, U3A, Rotary Club and others to extol the virtues and benefits of being a member of the ASC.

It is interesting looking back at just how afraid I was of public speaking; it was not simply being scared, it was a morbid terror which has now completely disappeared and I cannot be grateful enough to the ASC for helping me in my journey and I would like to specially thank Nigel Speedy the founder of Newport Speakers Club who started the journey for me.

Stephen Dance

District President for South West England and South Wales

INTRODUCING MICHAEL COX AND THE NEXT GENERATION

INTERVIEW BY CATHERINE WILLIAMSON



I know the ASC can attract new, younger, and enthusiastic members because of the package of skills, enjoyment and friendliness that we offer up and down the country

I spied Michael as he gave a vote of thanks after a compelling talk by Terry Waite at Warwick School. I turned and whispered to my husband, a teacher at the school, “Go get me that young man. What assurance and composure. He’s in effect just done a fantastic evaluation of a quite a daunting and imposing character who is Terry Waite”

My husband saw the glimmer in my eye that spelt talent spotted and dutifully sought out Michael later that week and invited him to one of our meetings and I am delighted to say some two years later he has just recently taken up the role of National Treasurer. I caught up with him recently and asked him to tell us more about himself.

Firstly, tell us a little bit about yourself?

I'm Michael Cox, 19 years old and currently studying at History at Durham in my second year. Hopefully, many of you managed to see my little intro video on Facebook and are thus somewhat acquainted with me already. I enjoy reading and have a cabin in my garden stuffed with many a politics and history tome.

I'm not exactly a sporty person but I do enjoy cycling round Warwickshire where I live if there's some good grub or pub at the end of the journey. As for public speaking, I suppose my youthful exploits in drama classes kicked off my interest in delivering speeches. It's hard to decide whether the speaking is more fun than the writing part, but I love bouncing around Durham scribbling down words, phrases or ideas onto my phone to jumpstart the writing process!

How did you find yourself joining the ASC?

My old school hosted former Prisoner of War and author Terry Waite to speak, and we had an audience of around 500 people. I was asked to deliver the vote of thanks and it must have been fairly good because you managed to get in touch with me to invite me along to Speakers Club in Leamington. I remember walking up the stairs to our former venue in the Fox and Vivian pub not really knowing what to expect. The evening was wonderful: what made me sign up on the spot was the family feel to the club, the support everyone received and how everyone was enthused and excited to improve on their oratorical skills, no matter their previous experience.

What is it that has motivated you to accept an NEC role?

In my head, I can become very attached to the things I love and enjoy- even though it can mean a bulging to-do list that never quite slims down! In this case, I know the ASC can attract new, younger, and enthusiastic members because of the package of skills, enjoyment and friendliness that we offer up and down the country. I suppose that knowing this, I'm motivated to do whatever I can to build and grow the ASC into something that so many more can access and receive the sort of welcome and buoyancy that I felt on that very first evening.

How do you think we need to evolve to attract younger people such as yourself?

One of the things that I've been stretched on is bringing youngsters into the Speakers Club

fold. The reality is that what we offer is not for everyone. But those who have stuck around, or come back to our Leamington club after their term at uni ends, return for several reasons but one of the biggest factors is **venue**. What we've managed to find in Leamington is an environment that is instantly familiar to young people and a place where they would quite happily spend two to three hours, with time both prior and after the meeting to catch up with fellow members. Equally, delivering a programme of meetings that is **diverse** is important; we've had workshops from ASC competition winners and members' friends that have been a rousing success, showing potential members of all ages that their journey in the ASC doesn't just end once they've done their Number 10 speech.

Your generation are going to take the brunt of COVID. How do you think the ASC can support younger people as they face new challenges and try to move forward?

You're absolutely right; the issues facing young people both now and after lockdown are immense and already taking their toll. But what Coronavirus has done is probably emphasise existing issues, such as lack of confidence and social anxiety, rather than create new problems. So we as an Association must be looking to perfect our model: ensuring that our clubs are welcoming spaces, our feedback to potential members is useful and kind and our attitudes towards expansion optimistic and bright. Young people are more likely to stick with something if they are supported and valued, so we ought to keep trying to provide such environments that are focussed on personal growth.

What most excites you about the future?

I'm a natural optimist so there is much to be excited about. Thinking of a post-Covid world, what do we have to look forward to? Reconnecting with friends and family, our fellow speakers and meeting in person rather than in a virtual sense- though I'm a huge fan of Zoom! What I'm most excited about is the way attitudes are changing toward mental health, personal development and emotional security. This crisis has exposed just how vulnerable many of us feel when we're cut off from our friends, our familiar patterns and pastimes. We have a huge opportunity then to help our neighbour, whoever and wherever they may be, and look out for each other. That we're already doing this in the ASC makes me very proud to be in a wider family like ours.

Catherine Williamson
Vice President

PROCESSES AND COMMUNICATIONS

ANNA TEWSON EXPLAINS HOW HORSHAM SPEAKERS CLUB WENT FROM DECLINE TO SUCCESS



Horsham Speakers Club (HSC) is currently one of the larger Clubs within the ASC, with a consistent annual membership of 40 or more, average meeting attendance of over 20 and a dynamic and motivated committee.

But of course, this hasn't always been so. Over the Club's 35-year history, there have been highs and lows. Venue issues, leadership vacancies and retention and recruitment woes, saw membership declining to under 10 for a period.

The last 10 years has seen the Club go from strength to strength with long standing members retained, a steadily growing membership, a dynamic committee, and a beautiful venue.

As with any success story, there have been lots of factors that have contributed to where we are now. Something we have found useful at HSC, is to break down our membership into segments and consider how we support them in different ways. This analysis also provided an opportunity

to review the processes we had in place for communicating with and managing our membership.

Now the words 'process review' may not be the most appealing or glamorous but getting the nuts and bolts right are so important in any well-oiled machine. Think of it as a service or a MOT to keep things running smoothly and at optimal performance.

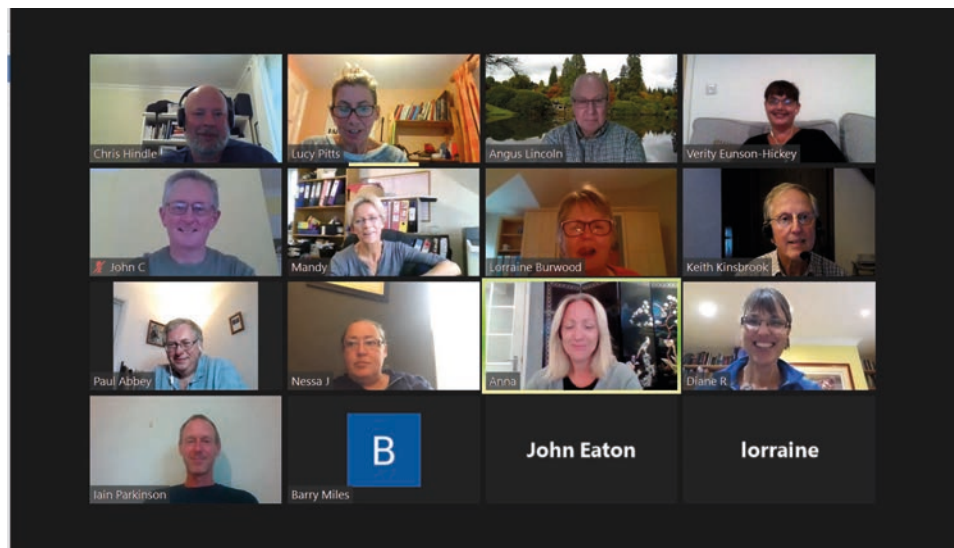
Below I share the different groups we've segmented our members into at HSC and make a note of some of the processes we have refined or put in place to the benefit of the Club. No doubt many of these will already be in place across most clubs, but if there are any ideas here that might prove useful, please do duplicate, or get in contact for more details.

Enquirers

At HSC we regularly have enquirers contact us either through member networking, our website or Facebook page. Having a consistent response communication is an important part of getting enquirers to their first meeting. Enquirers receive an email from our President that gives relevant information and really encourages a first visit. The Facebook page is updated regularly, and the website is up to date. Enquirers are added to our email distribution group (with appropriate GDPR compliance notices) and start to receive meeting notifications.

First timers

Having persuaded our enquirer to attend their first meeting, a warm welcome is crucial! At HSC, we have long had a 'welcome desk', normally manned by our Club Treasurer. Visitors and members alike, are warmly received, the pre-prepared agenda distributed, and first timers introduced to long standing members, who answer questions and provide reassurance and encouragement.



New members

Once we've managed to convert first timers into new members, a welcoming email from our Club President goes a long way. As Education Officer, I'll have a chat with them about their speaking goals, any concerns or fears and explain how the speaking journey works. New members are encouraged (but not coerced) into booking in their 'Icebreaker' assignment as soon as they feel able to.

Regular meetings (physical or virtual), clearly assigned roles and responsibilities and a strong common purpose have all helped the committee to become a strong proactive team

Members working through assignments 1 – 5

With 40 + members at HSC, planning a programme of who speaks when is essential, to ensure that everyone gets sufficient 'airtime' and feels satisfied that they are achieving their public speaking goals. A crucial part of this process is getting speakers provisionally booked in on a rolling 3 monthly basis (roughly 6 meetings at a time). Members working through the initial 5 assignments will usually get a speaking slot every 3 months, plus the opportunity to perhaps run the 'Warm Up' session as this is often a great confidence builder. The programme changes as time goes on, but members know when they have a speech coming up, giving them time to prepare. We always follow up after newer members have delivered their first few speeches – its all about building confidence and checking in.

Members working through assignments 6 – 10

Our more experienced members will also regularly get onto the speaking programme, in order to progress through their assignments. This group of members are often encouraged to run Topics and chair meetings, which is great for confidence building and important speaking skills in their own right.

Members working through Advanced assignments and beyond

We are very proud at HSC to have a sizeable number of members who have either completed their Advanced Certificate or are working through the Advanced assignments. Retention of this group is so important as these members are often providing valuable coaching and support to less experienced members, through evaluations, educational sessions, and informal mentoring. As a committee, we'll regularly check in separately with this group, thanking them for their support and asking if there is anything they would like to do over forthcoming weeks. Very often this generates offers of training sessions or the running of special sessions, which adds huge value to what we offer as a Club.

Committee

A small, proactive, and talented committee can make a Club and take a huge amount of pressure off the shoulders of the Club President – it shouldn't be a one-person job. Regular meetings (physical or virtual), clearly assigned roles and responsibilities and a strong common purpose have all helped the committee to become a strong proactive team.

Lots of work to establish, but once in place, these communications and processes really help to build and engage with your community and attract and retain members.

Of course, all ASC Clubs are now facing fresh challenges with the Covid 19 situation. Sharing ideas and approaches is now more important than ever. What are you doing to help your club weather the Coronavirus storm? Could this be replicated at other ASC Clubs? Lets all keep sharing what works for our own clubs and see how our individual successes can benefit and grow the whole organisation.

Anna Campbell

Education Officer, Horsham Speakers Club
President, ASC South Area

ADVICE FROM PARLIAMENT!

DR LUKE EVANS MP FOR BOSWORTH SPILLS THE BEANS



When we hear a good speech, we're also often left thinking, what a brilliant idea, and why did I not think of that

In 2017, the National Speech contest was won by Dr Luke Evans with a speech titled "What do I know about CDO?", an insightful but hilarious look at living with OCD. A member of Bromsgrove Speakers Club, Luke has since gone on to be elected as Bosworth MP in the general election for the conservative party in 2019 and is definitely a rising political star to watch out for. In fact, the keen eyed amongst you may have spotted him recently on TV.

Already a keen debater and speaker, Luke was introduced to the ASC at a training event run by none other than Dilwyn Scott. Sadly, work and family commitments mean he's not a regular ASC member at the moment but in July of this year he

was kind enough to share a few insights into his experience both before, during and after being a national winner!

“When I first joined, I’d been accepted on to the conservative party list of candidates and wanted to improve my speaking skills. The ASC was exactly what I was looking for – a safe place to practice with positive feedback. Hearing what was good about a speech, what could be better, trying different speaking techniques, learning from others, seeing people’s different reactions to different styles was all a brilliant learning experience. Sometimes I wouldn’t prepare and sometimes I would. Speakers Club was very different from debating clubs I’d been involved with previously. Everyone was there to improve, from the experienced to the less so, and it felt comfortable and safe.”

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As we all know speech subject matter is crucial, particularly when it comes to competitions, and although humour isn’t of course the only criteria, we all know that those speeches that get the audience laughing are often a great success. When we hear a good speech, we’re also often left thinking, what a brilliant idea, and why did I not think of that. Luke explained what he thinks makes good material for a winning speech.

“Finding a good subject is never easy and what works is always going to be very subjective. I gave my winning speech to a different audience a few weeks after winning at National and it wasn’t nearly as well received. That may have been partly down to me and my delivery being a bit flatter or because it was a different crowd and it just didn’t resonate so well. Who knows, but a lot of winning success is because everything just came good on the night, and that’s not necessarily always something you can prepare for.

That said, for me, I think the best subjects matter has to be something soft, but with an angle, often a Britishness that allows for some observational humour. The main thread has to be something we can all relate to. I often come up with one small idea, and then I back fill to bring the speech together. I always try and bring a speech full circle so that the start and the end are clearly linked. There also always has to be a good takeaway at the end.”

Of course, we all have our own ways of writing

and preparing a speech, but it’s also always intriguing to know what works for others.

“I write a full script and then I practice it without looking at the script. I do that to get comfortable with it and work out which sentences need work. I also identify trigger phrases that will help guide me through my final delivery. Once you know your trigger sentences and your core message, I find you start to worry less about delivery. I also try not to over rehearse.”

An important issue for many speakers is to what extent better public speaking skills will help in their careers or on their chosen path, and although it would seem that Luke was probably always destined for an interesting and successful career, his time at the ASC has done nothing but help him on his way.

“Without a doubt, my time at a Speakers Club has stood me in good stead. And yes, it has also probably influenced my speaking style. I think it’s important to know the rules about public speaking, not least so that you can then break them. But also because knowing the rules gives you something to fall back on if you suddenly have to give a speech with no or very short notice. And never is that more so than when it comes to Topics. Taking part at National is of course very nerve wracking but that in itself is a great experience.”

Whilst many of us are looking forward to being able to compete once more, let’s hope that Luke’s busy work schedule doesn’t keep him away from the ASC for too long but in the meantime, let’s wish him the very best of continued success.

HOW TO REBUILD

OR AS BORIS MIGHT SAY,
BUILD BACK BETTER



We have really placed an emphasis on swiftly giving our new young members positions of responsibility.

Three years ago, Stratford and South Warwickshire Club found themselves in a scenario familiar to many clubs in the Association. We were getting to that tipping point of viability, with just enough attendees at meetings to cover the necessary roles; the same people making speeches, and a general sense of a club in decline. What needed to happen had to be bold and audacious. At the AGM, we decided to bite the bullet and move from a remote village hall to a bustling town and trendy room in a popular high street pub. On the first night of the new season, we had just five members who were prepared to take our leap of faith. But we got started on rebuilding and rebranding our club. This year, we capitulated at 33 members.

Steps to success

The first step is simple: VENUE, VENUE and VENUE. Because we were in a pub, we made a point of having social gatherings prior to the commencement of the evening and having a catch-up drink at the end. Very simply, say for

instance if somebody had a difficult evaluation, we were able to encourage and 'patch them up' in a more relaxed and convivial environment. In our old venue, most of us on a bad night would have had 20-25 minutes of good stewing time negotiating very challenging roads and we were often frozen because we spent the whole night sat on our coats.

Renewed energy and a digital presence

We were successful in attracting two or three younger members quite early on. This just energised the membership and meant we got on the front foot of embracing social media. We completely overhauled the website, whilst having regular Facebook and Instagram posts to create a dynamic outward-facing persona.

Highlighting our values

A lot of emphasis was placed on our values; we would seek only to encourage and ensure

that we maintained standards, always having the individual at the heart of the process. A leadership team that was committed to advancing progress, whilst also having fun.

We believe everyone who we've invited to attend meetings has subsequently joined because they see us as warm, engaging and able to facilitate a quality evening. We have really placed an emphasis on swiftly giving our new young members positions of responsibility.

The importance of cake and community

At every meeting, there is always cake - a simple thing that provides pleasure and harkens back to more genteel days. Every member who's paid is invited to join our WhatsApp group. This has been invaluable in creating a sense of community, particularly provided some much-needed glue to hold us together during lockdown. It's clear within the club and to our guests that we have

a chemistry that binds us all up. It's a bit like the cake we have on that Thursday night; you can't necessarily describe the taste, but you can identify the ingredients that will lead to a pleasurable outcome.

Those ingredients could be summarised as:

- having a venue that is accessible, convivial to everyone in a popular area
- maintaining an attractive public profile on social media, whilst curating a sense of community through WhatsApp
- an accountable leadership team that are actively seen to be doing their bit
- a very diverse range of members, who all feel welcomed and know their personal development is as important to us as much as it is to them.



I first found out about speakers club on an Instagram story. I would never have known about it otherwise! The club was having a promotional evening in a coffee house that I frequent so I was comfortable going to the venue. Other than that, I had no idea what to expect going along, even wondering whether it would be too formal to wear trainers!

As soon as I walked in, I was greeted by warm and friendly members who got me involved from the beginning. The atmosphere was lovely and I was impressed with the range of ages - dispelling my thought that I would be the youngest there by some margin. And there was cake! I knew I'd definitely be back.

NEWS & ACHIEVEMENTS



Guest Speaker at Creigiau 23

Jeremy Richards Vice President of Cardiff Speakers Club was invited as guest speaker by Creigiau 23, Creigiau Golf Club on Tuesday 4th February 2020. Jeremy spoke for 45 Minutes and finished with a Q&A

Jeremy raised £150.00 for the Alzheimer's Society whilst completing his C2 (outside assignment) The charity is very close to Jeremy's heart.

Jeremy has completed his Diploma and is looking forward to our education director Philip McCaffrey presenting him with his certificate at our AGM scheduled early September.

Jeremy pictured below on the right is presented with a cheque by Kevan Eveleigh Creigiau 23, Kevan is also a member of Cardiff Speakers Club.



VIP visits Loughborough Speakers Club

It was a pleasure to welcome the Rt Hon Nicky Morgan to the March meeting of Loughborough Speakers Club. Nicky Morgan now Baroness Morgan of Cotes since her move to the House of Lords gave an interesting talk about her life in Westminster. Conscious of the fact that we don't include talks or speeches on the subjects of Sex, Politics or Religion we were given a glimpse into her experiences of people's attitudes and media coverage since joining the conservative party 30 years ago.

This visit was certainly a highlight for the members of the Loughborough Speakers Club and it is hoped she will visit whenever she has the time, maybe as a judge in one of our competitions!

To find out more about how you can be a member visit www.loughboroughspeakers.org.uk



The COVID 19 virus made us all face a stark choice, 'die or adapt.'

The Morecambe and Lancaster Speakers Club

During the early part of 2020 Clubs up and down the land found that they were unable to continue with 'Business as Usual', due to the constraints of Lockdown. The COVID 19 virus made us all face a stark choice, 'die or adapt.'

Wonderfully, many clubs decided on the latter course of action and through the use of Zoom technology, were able to continue with a semblance of normality.

From the outset, our 63 year old Club investigated the possibilities of the new approach and decided to hold Zoom Meetings on a weekly basis for as long as necessary during the pandemic.

It has to be said that sadly some members were not able to come to terms with the new approach, but luckily a small but like-minded group of four individuals were determined to make it happen. Since that time our Club has flourished and continues to expand steadily.

The weekly meetings are a great success and continue to be carefully adapted to meet the needs of members, some joining us regularly from other parts of the country. The use of the ASC Zoom account is greatly appreciated and allows meetings to run from 7 to 9 pm, punctuated by a short comfort break.

As an example, our agenda would normally include the following elements: a Warm Up Session (1 minute), a Speakers Section containing three speeches (5 to 8 minutes each), Speech Evaluations, a Development Section (Up to 5 minutes), a Topics Section. (Up to 3 minutes.) and Topic Evaluations.

Meetings normally conclude with a short but important Thoughts and Comments Section.

Guests and visitors are very welcome at our meetings and may contact us through our website- www.morecambeandlancasterspeakers.club or through Facebook- Morecambe and Lancaster Speakers Group ASC

Alan Harvey. (President)

IN MEMORIAM

It is with much sadness that we've had to say farewell to so many treasured colleagues in the last six months. The ASC will be poorer without them and they will be greatly missed by all.



David Smith

David Smith joined Blackburn Castle SC in 1983 and remained a staunch and valuable member until his last illness. He quickly established himself as a speaker, particularly with a natural talent for use of the voice, gestures and gentle humour. David's perceptive evaluations helped everyone.

During his career, he was a diligent and enthusiastic Club, Area and Western District President, and a valuable member of committees. Two of David's sons, Adrian and Gavin, also became club members and both served as Club President, while wife Jackie was a member of two clubs.

In the 1990s it was David who came up with mnemonic for the letters ASC with the strap line Achieve Speaking Confidence, which is still in use today.

David was a gentle man and a gentleman, and his epitaph could be "He Achieved Speaking Confidence." We shall miss him.



Eric Smith

Morecambe and Lancaster Speakers Club member Eric Smith sadly passed away this year age 87. He was a longstanding and helpful member of the club.

Born in Morecambe, as part of his National Service, Eric served in the R.A.F. as a mechanic. He went on to invent a Mechanical Elephant – which took children on rides on the beach. Later owned two garages and you can see our Eric on YouTube giving a talk on his life (Eric Smith Morecambe).

He will be sadly missed. Thank you, Eric.



Roger Mundy

It is with great sadness that we in Cardiff report the passing of Roger Mundy who was such a hugely influential member of our club.

Roger joined Cardiff Speakers Club shortly after its formation. He was a man of considerable energy and great loyalty. For many years Cardiff Speaker's Club was one of the largest; if not the largest club, within the family of Speaker's clubs and Cardiff's success was, in no small way, a measure of Roger's unstinting commitment.

Roger was club president in 1990. He was speaker of the year twice, he won the Roger Mundy Cup for impromptu speaking and the Mike Thomas evaluation trophy four times. Roger also won the Sam Black Topic Cup five times and was Man of the Year five times which was an award to a member who the club felt had contributed most.

Roger was born in Stamford in 1942 but following the death of his father the family moved to Cardiff where the young Roger attended Howardian High School. There he enjoyed acting. During his 20s he furthered that hobby by working as an occasional film and television extra and also as a volunteer for the Samaritans.

Roger met his wife Elizabeth in December 1974. He was married in 1976. Elizabeth and Roger had two children Jessica and Laura. And later was thrilled to become a grandfather to Emma, Evie, Josh and Ollie.

Roger's commitment to Cardiff Speaker's club was an enduring passion. He served on its Committee where he continually sought to promote the benefit of public speaking to the widest audience. He produced a bi-monthly newsletter

published under the title of 'Speakeasy' and also made contributions to the Association of Speakers Club magazine.

Roger was passionate about public speaking. He supported the Rotary Youth Speaks and could be found ably judging its competitions. He also established a speaking course at a city high school to raise awareness of the importance of public speaking to pre-university age students.

The members of Cardiff Speaker's Club have lost a dear colleague and friend. The movement of Speakers Clubs has throughout its history had many strong, passionate and committed members. Roger was such a member. The movement is the poorer for his passing.



Neil McLeod, National President 2005/06

Neil McLeod sadly died on 9 August 2020 leaving his wife Maureen, daughter Wendy and son Andrew.

The son of a GP, Neil was born in St Andrews, educated at Fettes College in Edinburgh and studied Law at Cambridge and Edinburgh. His working career started in Edinburgh, but he later moved to Elgin in 1982 where he fulfilled the role of Solicitor at Moray Council for fourteen years before moving to work at RAF Lossiemouth.

He served on many different Committees over the years and was appointed Chairman of the Moray Conservative and Unionist Association in 2016.

As befits one born in St Andrews, Neil was a keen golfer and had played to a single figure handicap for many years. He was member of the R&A and Elgin Golf Club.

He and Maureen were very keen horsey people and involved in many horse events in the North and elsewhere in the UK, so much so they were awarded Volunteers of the Year by Horse Scotland in 2017

Neil joined the ASC in the early 80s and was at times Area President, District President and in 2005 was installed as National President. Over the years he has represented Northern District in many National Finals as a Speaker, an Evaluator and Topics contestant.

He was a keen Burns man and spoke at many Burns Suppers.

Neil will be remembered for his quite distinctive and charismatic voice but more importantly as a very enthusiastic and dedicated supporter of the ASC and an accomplished and respected National President. He contributed much to our Association and will be recognised

for his support, experience, knowledge and encouragement by the numerous members who knew him over many years.

The personal attributes for which he will be remembered, and which encapsulate his strength of character – Neil was a true Gentleman of integrity and charm.



Peter Riley

Peter was an enthusiastic member of Wyre Speakers Club for over 25 years. He developed a stammer at the age of eight when his father died. The stammer persisted throughout his school life, National Service,

university days and into adulthood. He joined Fleetwood Rotary Club in 1972 and when invited to become president he vowed to overcome his fear of public speaking. He was subsequently so happy with his new-found 'freedom of speech' and joined W.S.C. in order to support others facing similar fears.

Peter was a man of quiet charm, a master of the considered one-liner with illuminating insight and wit, and with many good stories to relate. He became President of Wyre Speakers in 2002 and also held the office of Treasurer for many years. He was a finalist in the National Speech Contest which took place in Blackpool in 2000. It was a proud moment for his children and his wife Christine who caught his enthusiasm for public speaking and continues to support W.S.C..

He was diagnosed with Parkinsons disease in 2012 but continued to enjoy the friendship and fellowship of Speakers Club until his death in February.

BECOME A BETTER
SPEAKER, BETTER
PRESENTER AND
BETTER LEADER

