



TAKE IT FROM

June marks another new era for the Association – we welcome our new chair, Harriet Kelsall, and new president, David Doyle. Belinda Morris asks them what the road ahead has in store for them, the NAJ and the industry as a whole.

HARRIET KELSALL – CHAIR

What has prompted you to get so actively involved in the Association and how do you feel about your new role?

When I first joined the BJA and NAG (as they were then) I had been building my business successfully for a few years but felt as though I was working in a vacuum. But once I became a member all that changed – I made contacts, got ideas and met people in the same situation as me. It was a breath of fresh air and I loved it; I wished I'd joined sooner!

Becoming more involved was a gradual thing. I was asked to join a committee and I was initially terrified – important people sitting round a big shiny boardroom table! But I realised that part of our job is to give something back, help people to build better businesses – younger people in particular.

When Gary Wroe asked me to become vice-chair, which is a position that works towards becoming chair after two years, I was excited. But there was a lot to learn and it's a big responsibility. Being a designer, manufacturer and retailer is an advantage, but it's a very big industry and I'm not prepared for all of it, so I have spent the last two years getting to know and understand the various segments.

What has that entailed?

I began by setting up the Education Steering Group – which I have now passed on to Heather Callaway – as I wanted the JET courses to benefit the whole of the newly merged association. And I've established the Better Business Group, looking at issues like legal compliance and finance as well as responsible sourcing and sustainability... all aiming to enable designers, manufacturers, retailers and other jewellery professionals to live up to our core values of honesty, integrity and professionalism.

I also want to help foster an environment of collaboration across the industry and have been working with [outgoing chairman] Simon Johnson to do this.

I've got to know the IRVs and been to Loughborough (something else I should have done ages ago; it's amazing – everyone should go!) and I've been to the JET Business Network Congress, which is also brilliant, and has helped me to better understand retailers.

Now you're in this role, what are your priorities for the future?

Together with CEO Simon Forrester I want to work towards improving the governance of the NAJ. We'll bring together high quality, expert volunteers in a way that gets the best out of them – for themselves and the industry – so that we are well equipped to steer the direction of the Association... furthering our mission to increase consumer confidence in buying jewellery.

So what's on the immediate agenda?

Top of the list is to deliver a brilliant new NAJ website. We aim to provide members with the tools they need to run their businesses better, so that will be at its core – lots of links, signposts and helpful information, which we'll deliver in stages. The website will also be more customer-facing.

We'll also be looking at industry skills, including our education offering. The Association will be committed to being at the forefront of retail and manufacturing apprenticeships, so we're looking to add value here. We should be even more able to help start-ups – the industry needs fresh creativity; these are the people who'll be showing us the way in the future, so we need a membership structure in place that helps budding businesses. We'll be continuing with our mentoring programme, making improvements where needed.



What other aims do you have for the next few years...?

The NAJ must be relevant to all its members. And because I have benefitted so much from this, I want to make sure that we offer lots of networking opportunities – for inspiration, for doing business and for friendship. I also want to help make sure that the UK still leads the way in jewellery responsibility and ethics. We've made a lot of progress in the last 20 years, but there's still a long way to go and the NAJ should signpost the way.

And what's in it all for you?!

The same as it would be for anyone who decides to get involved with the Association – helping people feels good! But beyond thinking altruistically, I've benefitted from the advice of friends and contacts who I've met by sitting on the committees and steering group; now whenever I have a question or need a contact, I know exactly which friend to ask. Being part of such an amazing network has helped my business, naturally. After a few years I now understand the shape of things and if I can help others, I want to do that. I just hope that I can now live up to people's expectations!

How do you intend to fulfil your role?

If I do something I need to do it properly. I like to get involved, so it won't just be about glad-handing! I have asked Harriet, and board members Andrew Hinds and Gary Wroe, to tell me what they expect from me, and my motivation will be to progress that. But I will clearly want to chip in; if there's something I believe strongly about I will make a fuss! For instance I would like to see more networking with other industry associations. Things like this, that I have an interest in, I would like to help drive forward.

I'm delighted to say that Harriet and I have already started the process of working together and we speak quite regularly. I'm very much looking forward to working with her and assisting wherever I can to enable her to achieve her wish list as chair.

What do you feel that you bring to the position?

Ultimately I think they want an 'old boy' who knows the working of the industry, who knows lots of people and who knows how to speak to people. The commercial arena has changed; half my business [Birmingham-based Jewellery Brokers] is now done with members of the public, so I straddle two sides of the industry. [*"David has a huge amount of experience and is a font of expertise and contacts – he's always ready and happy to help. I think we'll be a great balance together."* Harriet Kelsall]

Will you still remain involved in your other committees and retain other roles? I'm thinking of the Benevolent Society.

Yes. I'm treasurer and vice chairman of the Benevolent Society, it gives me the opportunity to organise charity events, which I enjoy. The role has actually grown as we have two events a year now. With an enthusiastic team working alongside me we have really grown the Benevolent Society – profits have soared and so we are able to donate more to good causes and worthy people.

I'm delighted to also be a warden of the Assay Office Birmingham and director of the AnchorCert Group. All of the interactions involved in these roles help keep me involved in the trade at every level. I would say that these positions will be part and parcel of assisting in my role as president as they are a constant source of topical and pertinent feedback.

DAVID DOYLE – PRESIDENT

After deciding to step back a little from official association roles (ex-chairman of the BJA and previous president of the Federation), you've now leapt back into the fray... what has prompted this?

It was a huge honour to be asked. To be honest I was shocked – presidents need to be bigger industry hitters than me! But, in a year when we have a new chair and a new CEO for a new association that is settling into the Federation, I feel that I can add value. I was one of the architects of the merger – together with Rosina Singleton I rearranged the Federation articles that allowed it to happen. So I have a sense of ownership; I want to make sure that it works. Plus I have experience and I can speak for my peers. Patrick Fuller is a very hard act to follow, but actually I'm in this position now because of Patrick – he suggested to me years ago that I should get involved in extra curricular activities.

