

COALITION OF CARERS IN SCOTLAND

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 24 FEBRUARY 2010

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2009-2010

Last year I said that the year just past had been exciting – today I ask the question “Just how much excitement do we need”?

In a moment Claire Cairns will detail the activities which have shaped 2009/10 for the Coalition, and she will touch on the future. Our Treasurer, Mary Stewart, will sketch out our financial position; but first I should like to take just a moment or two to look at the past year through my own perspective.

The Coalition's influence has continued to broaden – even beyond the many activities which Claire will describe. At the same time, all our activities are guided by carers' priorities, and by the Coalition's unique ability to bring together carers and their supporters in our regular meetings, face to face with legislators and others who operate at a national and regional level (frequently with some very sparky results!), to the mutual benefit and increased understanding of all.

We provide training; but we also influence it, as illustrated by our involvement (with others) in the Carer Training Pilot launched in November.

Our Working Groups enable us to encompass broad remits; both geographically and in terms of the issues we take forward.

We are helping to shape the future for carers through our participation in the development of the new Carers' Strategy for Scotland, just as we have helped to shape the present (after all, in the past the present was the future).

To make sure that carers' voices are heard, we have involved ourselves in campaigning; but none of the work we do would be at its most effective without partnership – hence our strong and continuing emphasis on working with others.

The environment “out there” is increasingly challenging, both in terms of the number and breadth of the issues faced by all those involved in the lives of carers, and in the context of the resources to face up to those issues. For me, in these challenging times, a particular strength of the Coalition lies in our ability to build bridges between areas, between issues, and between people. It is by building, and using, those bridges that we are all much more likely to continue the improvement in carers' lives for which we have been striving for many years.

Finally, it is always a pleasure to pay tribute to those who have helped us to take the Coalition forward. So – Thanks to my colleagues on the Executive who give their time and expertise so generously to steer the Coalition towards a successful future; to the leaders and members of our Working Groups, who enable us to be effective over a much broader range of issues: to our funders (whom we must convince of the superb

value for money we represent); to our Network Co-ordinator, Claire Cairns (and we all realise what superb value for money Claire represents!); to Mary Stewart and Angela from the Fife Carers' Centre who help us to manage the Coalition's finances (so that we use the money to best value); to Don Williamson and his colleagues at Shared Care Scotland for their continued partnership (thus proving that one plus one make more than three); and, last but by no means least, to our members, without whom there wouldn't be a Coalition, and who do so much to push forward the case for Scotland's carers.

Thank you all.

Alan Scougal, February 2010