

General Manager's Report – an Update on 2016

Challenging and rewarding - the words that best describe life at the ManxSPCA! I trust that the summary of the more significant events and initiatives that have occurred so far in 2016, below, gives some indication of the scope of the Society's work and the impact it has both on animals and the Manx community.

Kennels

The use of animal behaviourists, an initiative started in the latter part of 2015, has helped the Kennels team to develop their skills, and to provide higher levels of support for our rescue dogs. Observations of dogs are better recorded and tracked; interventions are more effective; and rehoming rates are the best we've seen in recent years (with Casper leaving us after four years, and Tasha and Susi after more than two).

Sadly, despite this additional support, we were not able to help Hughie and he was put to sleep in February.

You won't be surprised to read that the dogs we find most difficult to rehome are Staffies, and so we held Super Staffie Week in June to highlight the advantages of owning this breed and to profile our dogs. Several Staffies found new homes as a result, but we still have Ziggy, Eva and Sid with us.

Despite being a complete super star, literally, Lola the English Bull Terrier is also still with us. She appeared in Oliver! at the Gaiety for two weeks in August and took it all in her stride, becoming a firm favourite with the cast, crew and audience ... but none of them were able to take her home.

It is important for all our dogs, but particularly the ones that are with us for more than a few weeks, that their lives are enriched during the time in the Kennels. The Kennels team make full use of games, toys and treats as well as providing fun for free with cardboard boxes, shredded paper and plastic bottles.

Cattery

Enrichment toys and activities are also an important part of Cattery life, and we have had some amazing items bought for us through our Amazon Wish List. Having interactive toys helps cats to display their normal behaviours, and it enables potential adopters to see them at play. Our cats are normally rehomed within a few weeks, and we always have a waiting list for kittens.

Our 'trap, neuter and return' approach to feral cats continues, and recent funding from the Manx Lottery will help us expand the programme still further.

Small Animals Unit

Rabbits should live with other rabbits and so the SAU team work hard to help prospective new owners bond their existing rabbit, if they have one, with one they would like to adopt. This can take up to two weeks, but it is time well spent when it results in a successful and permanent rehoming.

We have had several Flemish Giants in the SAU this year, and the Society supported the Police with a successful prosecution relating to five of them being set free in a local plantation to fend for themselves.

Aviary

The improved facilities mean that more wild birds are surviving, especially the young ones. In the height of the Summer we were receiving an average of ten calls per day about injured or abandoned birds, mostly herring gulls.

Feral chickens are an ongoing problem, with peacocks becoming more and more of an issue. The Aviary team have a good network of 'bird people' and they can usually relocate these birds quite quickly, but cockerels can sometimes be with us for several weeks.

Staff

Leavers	Joiners
Jodie O'Connor	Vicky Lewis
Emma Jackson	Ruth Belfield
Jenny Corran (retired)	Alix Hannah
Peter Quayle	Debbie Dixon

Volunteers

Almost 150 people have signed up to become volunteers so far this year. We are grateful to all the new and existing volunteers, whether they can commit to helping our animals weekly or as and when they have the time. We have some very dedicated volunteers and they have a hugely positive impact on our work.

At the risk of offending those I don't name, special mention must be made of Barbara Cole who spearheads the 'Manx Wild Bird Rehabers' network. She and her 'team' have taken dozens of the smaller birds for us, and nurtured them with commitment and expertise.

A group of volunteers operate under the 'Friends of the ManxSPCA' banner and they have been busy this year with fundraising initiatives, from collecting gold and silver, to organising car boot sales, and manning stalls at fairs and shows. Please let me know if you would like to join the group, or set up one of your own.

Charity Shops

The shops rely heavily upon volunteers. Bucks Road makes a very valuable, and consistent, contribution to the Society's income and we are optimistic that our new shop in Ramsey will be equally successful. Alex Morrison, the manager of the Windsor Road boutique that was too discreetly located and that had to give half of its profits away as agency commission, has transferred to Ramsey. We plan to hold an official shop opening with Lady Gozney later in the year – Lady Gozney has agreed to be the Society's Patron and we are looking forward to her involvement.

Education

We now have a suite of Welfare leaflets that we give to pet owners for advice, or to people thinking of becoming an owner so that they understand the commitment required.

Our work with local schools and the College now has more structure with the input of Debbie Dixon who is funded by Barclays as our Educational Specialist.

Capital Projects

The additional signage around Ard Jerkyll and the informational signs in the Nature Trail assist with the educational projects as well as helping visitors to enjoy their time at Ard Jerkyll.

The overflow car park is work-in-progress, but it has already provided much needed parking space when the PlayBarn is being used for events.

The Chill (Out) Rooms have been a long time in the planning. The project was put out to tender in April but quotes from five local builders were far in excess of the funds raised (£60,000). We have now parred back the design and Pyramid Construction have been commissioned.

The Scheinberg Family have been incredibly generous towards the Society during the year, helping to fund various running costs. They have also agreed to fund several outdoor dog runs, and construction work on these will commence soon.

Fundraising and Public Relations

Social media is increasingly important in how we communicate externally – and most of our posts reach more than 3,000 people.

Our new website went live in March and, as you might expect, it receives most ‘hits’ to its adoption pages. The ManxSPCA’s video is embedded in the website, and we are very grateful to Your Movie Crew for donating the production of the video to us.

Other on-line initiatives this year have been the increasing use of the Amazon Associates log-in (when the link to Amazon on our website is used, the Society receives a small percentage of the purchase price of the goods ordered) and the use of Just Giving as a fundraising tool.

The weekly Courier articles continue to help us to communicate with an audience that might not be au fait with social media or the internet, and we are grateful to IoM Newspapers for providing the print space to us.

I have also made regular appearances on Manx Radio and 3FM, not least when the proposed Animal Welfare Act and the Select Committee’s recommendations were discussed in Tynwald in May. The ManxSPCA is now in dialogue with DEFA (Stuart Jaques, Chief Veterinary Officer) about the next stages in the drafting of the Act.

Various fundraising events have taken place during the year, some organised by supporters and others by staff - or a mixture of both; some at Ard Jerkyl and others elsewhere (from church halls to marquees). The Easter Bunny and Guinea Pig show took place in the PlayBarn and attracted more than 400 guests, and September’s Rescue Dog of the Year and Fun Dog Show attracted more than 200 people and 90 dogs, and both events raised several hundred pounds. The Manx Youth Swing Band Evening in July was the first evening event we’ve held in the PlayBarn and it was magical, with wonderful young musicians and lots of merriment.

The PlayBarn is being used more and more for events - with Pug Parties, Chihuahua Parties and German Shepherd Parties becoming a regular feature.

Events raise much needed income for the Society, and help to fund running costs, as do the legacies we receive. The Society cannot survive without legacies, and the Will Awareness Evening held in the Tearooms in April provided generic advice about wills and how they can be used to help charities. We will hold another such Evening next Spring.

In closing, I have been overwhelmed during the past year by people’s warmth and generosity towards the Society – it is viewed by so many as a ‘national treasure’. The work it does, seven days a week, 365 days a year, is so vital and must be sustained into the future. I believe that we have a committed team of staff, a talented Board of Trustees, amazing volunteers, and a bedrock of support from Members – all of which which will help us to make 2017 an even better year. Thank you.

Juana Warburton
General Manager
October 2016