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View from the Chair

Firstly, may I wish all our members a happy and successful 1998 and looking forward, I hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend our next AGM and meeting, in April. The theme will be storage, the venue The Conservation Centre, Liverpool, the organisers, Tracey Seddon and Donna Hughes. If you are in the process of a lottery bid, an area service grant aided project or an on-going exercise to improve or upgrade storage for natural history collections, start writing your paper or poster now and let us know about it.

Another important reason for attending the meeting is to vote on a new constitution. The committee have decided to try to gain charitable status for the group, largely in order to retrieve funds from UKIC held in the name of the old Natural Sciences Section. These funds can only be transferred to another charity with similar aims and therefore currently remain in limbo. We are working hard to read (and understand) the mass of information supplied by the Charity Commissioners and to extract the necessary bits, all being well, the committee should be able to approve a draft constitution and application soon which we will send to the Charity Commission for comments before presenting it to you the membership.

The committee has also set up two working groups. Following discussion at last year's AGM one group has met to discuss the future direction of our organisation, Kirsten Walker (chair) reports on results in this issue. A second group is going to look into training in natural science conservation. Changes at MTI and moves to accredit conservators can only benefit from natural science input if we discuss and put forward suggestions. No-one else is likely to fight the natural science cause on our behalf, or at least to our satisfaction.

On the training front, one benefit of our corporate membership of the Conservation Forum is that we receive a block allocation of MGC training grant for our members to attend conferences. Conferences are only eligible if they are put into an annual forward plan, being drawn up early in 1998, our AGM and April Storage meeting will be on the list. If members are organising other meetings, for example on pest control, please let us know, grants can't be awarded to meetings not on the list. Applications for grant aid should be made to our committee who will then

allocate money on a first come first service basis. Sums are not enormous, but should cover several members attending the April AGM free of charge, or if we receive lots of applications, at significantly reduced cost.

The "Ten agents of deterioration" pull out and keep section of our newsletter has received a great deal of interest and praise, please keep the contributions coming. We are considering looking into publishing the articles, with up-to-date additions, once the series is complete, so if you suffered a flood last week, its not too late to write it up.

Finally, I will be stepping down as chair in a few weeks time, a month or two short of the end of my term of office. This is in order to hand over the reins before a rather noticeable bulge turns into a baby. I would like to thank all those committee members, past and present, who have served with me over the years, particularly the officers who have assisted me during my term as chair. I am very proud of the collective efforts that turned an idea at the 1992 conference in Madrid into an active group of over 80 members. Lets keep the momentum going.

Kate Andrew

