From: Evan Dawson
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Dear RPS Trustees, staff and volunteers

Peter Hayes sent me this this uplifting post from our FB group, from a member called Mary Braddock:

> "I have been a conservation volunteer for 27 years and a member of the RPS for 18 months. To be a volunteer could be considered a vocation. I have received so much information and support from RPS and applaud the efforts everyone is making for us all. My biggest regret... that I did not join RPS sooner. Thank you everyone for what you are giving us all."

It's clear that the RPS has responded with great creativity to the lockdown, engaging with large numbers of members and non-members throughout the UK and much further afield. Several staff members and volunteers have said that, despite the office being closed, this experience has brought everyone much closer together.

Last Friday, we had a jolly online send-off for **Mike Taylor**, who was sitting on his canal boat with a crate of wine that had been presented to him by everyone.

This week, on **Monday**, I was back alone in RPS House, speaking with **Michael**, **Nikki** and **Alan Hodgson** - but mostly getting on top of the mountain of emails and paperwork that Mike left me. The building itself is now well prepared for Covid-safe use, thanks to great efforts by **Matt** and **Nikki**.

On **Tuesday** morning, I had my first formal (online) meeting with our Trustees, together **Michael** and **Nikki**. They led a really interesting discussion about reviewing the organisation's future strategy, which I will be drafting over the coming weeks - drawing on conversations with trustees, staff, volunteers, members and a wide group of stakeholders. In the afternoon, I met with **Michael** to understand his perspective on the organisation. His expertise in the history of photography is inspirational, as well his many ideas about the role of photography and the RPS in society.

On **Wednesday**, I continued my creative marathon of introductory conversations. I spoke with **Kate** about her role supporting our wide network of volunteers; and with **Rebecca** about the marketing and comms of the RPS; and looked at the management accounts with **John** and **Nikki**. I spoke with **Nathan** (who was in the office) about his role handling all the membership data; and then **Simon Bibb** about the wider strategy for membership development. During this time, **Alan** and **Emily** were handling a huge problem with the website, which had been preventing anyone booking onto any events for over a week! They were being supported by **Peter**, who was helping keep all the volunteers updated, which made a big difference. Thank you so much.

That evening, **Rebecca** launched the first *"Journal Extra"* email newsletter (which I hope you received), with some fantastic stories and articles, supplementing the print version of the Journal.

Yesterday, I spoke with **Stewart Wall** about his roles supporting members and various committees; with **Liz** about the education and outreach programmes; and with **Sally** about the galleries and exhibitions work. We are now hoping to re-open the building early next year, subject to agreeing the programme and budget (and the pandemic situation of course). At midday, **Emily** and I cheered the website being fixed at last, and then I briefly joined her international meeting of web-editors. I then spoke with **Caroline Kenyon** from the Food Photographer of the Year competition; and with **Simon Bibb** and **Nikki** about the CRM system that will need to be replaced next year. This is likely to be a time-consuming, expensive and technical project for us, so forward planning is essential.

Today, I've spoken with **Emily** about her website work; and with **Alan Hitch** about his role supporting the database, member events and communications. I've also been putting some shape on the strategy review, pulling together the many pages of notes I've made so far. I've had two daily calls with **Nikki** and **Michael** throughout this time, which has been a great support to me. **Nikki** has been working with her team this week on our VAT return, which is due by midnight tonight. Good luck!

Tonight, I have my first photography job in months, shooting an outdoor concert at St George's in Bristol. I'm really looking forward to it.

Next week, I have another list of fascinating introductory conversations, as well as our all-staff meetings on Tuesday, and starting to write my first set of board papers.

Please do keep in touch, and do let me know if you'd like to discuss anything.

Happy weekending!

Evan

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