It’s a year since **Evelyn Stacey** stepped down as our chair and her departure was a real loss to the organization. **William Theed**, our President, was unable to be here today as he is away, but we look forward to his continued support over the coming year

I was asked to be **chairman** in the late autumn and I was both extremely flattered and all too soon **conscious of the task** that lay ahead.

Before I accepted the role, work was already underway to recruit a **development manager** to combine the roles of Web manager, development, marketing and recruitment person and to oversee our PR activities. No small task.

One of my first tasks was to be involved in the interviews and we had some very strong candidates, but no one was better qualified to fill this key role **than Jennette Baxter**, who many of you will know, have already met or will have before the day is out.

During this past year, much work has been undertaken by **Diane Bassett and Beth Martin from South West Lakes Trust** to put in place a proper system for managing our membership and the collection of fees. This is far from glamourous work but it is essential for our organization and we are on surer footing than we have been for some time.

**2016 had been a year of change** and that change will continue this year. We are now a much more streamlined organization, one that needs to focus on the key tasks of growing our membership and revenue, and to on our social media presence which today is a cornerstone of all tourism marketing.

There has been some considerable success already in growing our social media presence. There was a **five fold increase in the likes on our Facebook page** in the last year and close **to 20% increase in the last 3 months**. For the year ahead we have set ambitious targets which will help us achieve the levels of support for everyone involved in tourism on Exmoor.

When I first became Chairman I was confused about the two organizations that represented Exmoor… **Visit Exmoor** and **Exmoor Tourism Association**. It’s a challenge to market one name, let alone two, so we have agreed to be single-minded in the use of the name **Visit Exmoor** in all our communications and activities.

Personally, and for the organization as a whole, it is appropriate to thank **Robert Downes** of West Somerset and Taunton Deane Council for his tireless efforts on behalf of Visit Exmoor, and particularly his help with the Hinkley Point Programme, whose funding is so important.

Equally, **Dan James** of Exmoor National Park Authority has been a superb asset for Visit Exmoor and together with Robert he is the backbone of so much that is achieved and planned. I met with **Sarah Bryan** the new Chief Executive of ENPA and she is tremendously supportive of our efforts and very keen to continue the support provided by her organization

I should personally like to thank **Andy Parsons**, our vice chairman, who has worked hard behind the scenes to put Visit Exmoor on a surer footing and make the organization fit for the tasks that lie ahead. Last, but by no means least, **Bryan Cath** who has so diligently and effectively looked after visit Exmoor.com

**Aristotle** was right you know, and had the foresight to see what was important for Visit Exmoor. **The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.**

That’s what is **key to our future success**. Working together across all sectors of the tourism industry, whether it be accommodation providers, restaurants, cafes, visitor attractions, tourism related business, farm shops, farmers markets is what will help Visit Exmoor do a better job and to grow.

It’s our key mission for this year to attract more members to benefit every organization involved in helping to make Exmoor one of the most attractive places to visit in Britain. With the weakness of the pound we have a real opportunity to bring even more visitors to Exmoor and that is our mission.

Onwards and upwards…