

Paper for NLETS meeting on 15th March 2015
from Mary Fee, Co-ordinator LETSlink <london@letslink.org>

INTRODUCTION

I was about to send a message out with some suggestions for the agenda, but then received two papers from Henu, which I felt I needed to take into account, and another two this evening, so apologies for this later-than-intended communication.

I'm afraid I will have to apologise for the AGM on Sunday 15th March, due to a family event I have been invited to, so am sending these notes, basically to say that at the meeting on 11th February I was pleased to see both earlier and more recent members in attendance, and hopefully there is enough energy to carry this organisation forward, despite the difficulties which have occurred.

BACKGROUND OF PROBLEMS IN MANAGEMENT OF NLETS

In my role as co-ordinator of LETSlink, I have been called in each time NLETS has hit a crisis, firstly when the original Amiga computer failed, and we provide a new system, based on Access, to manage the accounts, and later assisting the Management Group to define their roles, when there were difficulties with managing staff in the office. Early in 2009 after a year-long process of consulting the membership, we installed an online system, using software which had recently become available. Successful implementation involved members of the Management Group sharing control of the system, which was in progress, but was halted by the then office administrator, Donna, breaching trust by hacking into the LETSlink account.

Donna then led a campaign against LETSlink, involving libellous communications, a general meeting conducted by an outside facilitator which was more like an encounter group than an EGM, followed by secret meetings of the management group, and an AGM after which private member data was sent to CES in South Africa, where it was hosted in such a way as to make it visible to the general public. This system works the opposite way from LETS whereby the payee is able to take the funds, rather than payment being made by the owner of the account, and involves control by a single individual, the office administrator.

Henu describes the switch to CES as having been properly done, but it had the sole intention of ousting LETSlink and was not in the interests of the organisation as it caused disruption to a system which was functioning well with a positive uptake by members. The reaction of most members to the move was to refuse to pay their renewal subs, leaving the organisation in dire financial straights. As Henu attests, others went into their accounts and deleted their personal data in order to protect their privacy.

MORE RECENT INVOLVEMENT OF LETSLINK with NLETS

Early in 2014, I was invited by the management group to re-engage by attending their meetings, and on 25th February 2014, the Treasurer, Luciah Kagiso reported the balance of funds was just over £1000, which would last less than a year, with the organisation's current financial commitment including office rent, and urged the group to consider fund-raising. I took notes of this meeting, and two further meetings held on 25th and 30th March, after which I was told that I was no longer welcome and further meetings of the management group, now including Henu as office administrator, were held without the dates being announced to members.

FINANCIAL PROPOSALS

After Henu took over from Woody as chair in 2008, she presided over a reduction in the membership fee from a healthy sliding scale of £20/£10/£5 to a point where unemployed renewals were only £3. Friday's proposal (which I've heard she has already been implementing) that ex-members should be chased to reimburse the organisation in sterling for their pledge deficits may have some idea of "rectitude" behind it, but she doesn't say what mechanisms would be employed to chase these debts. Her latest, that pledges be sold for sterling at 2 pledges to the pound is even less attractive. Neither of these policies would bring NLETS into good repute in the community, or is a substitute for good financial management - a recent attempt to fund-raise was so badly promoted that a handful of members who attended barely raised the room hire fee, which I gather was pocketed by Henu in order to meet her own expenses claim, which does not inspire confidence.

NOMINATIONS

Thus I endorse Henu's recommendations for a team of new people to serve on the Management Group, except for her own nomination as Treasurer. This proposal was based on Luciah being ineligible, having served as Treasurer for five consecutive years. My reasoning is that since Luciah's recommendations were not carried out, and she has not engaged for over a year, she could be deemed to have resigned in February 2014, and is therefore now eligible. She is a professional, is ethical, and should be invited, and even pleaded with, to come back on board as Treasurer.

As most members will know, I am committed to the future of LETS in London and the UK, and will do all I can to engage with the group which is elected, in order to create a better future for NLETS. I trust that the meeting will have positive energy and will be successful in electing a new team. **MF/mf/150314**