

# Presidential Letter

MR DOUG MCWHINNIE



**As summer turns into autumn,** it is time to think beyond next year's annual meeting at Southport and select a venue for 2010. It is the one topic which provides endless discussion at council – and beyond. Members can be divided in to “city slickers” or “seaside aficionados” according to venue preference. However, as you might expect, the equation is rather more complex than that!

The conference group must select a venue to provide an auditorium capable of seating 300–400 delegates with appropriate break-out rooms for parallel sessions. Most importantly, adequate surrounding space is required for the trade exhibition (which has been more than successful over the last few years) and a further facility on site or nearby for the

Thursday evening official dinner and entertainment. Recent venues have set an appropriately high standard and finding a location to tick all the boxes is not always easy. Should we return to a previously successful venue or is it better to constantly seek pastures new? We do try to travel the length and breadth of the country and these “political considerations” clearly influence site selection. The presence of an enthusiastic “local organiser” can also help with the decision, as can good or bad transport connections.

In these difficult financial times (and I mean within the NHS rather than global considerations), we must plan the conference to a budget, which ensures the registration fees are affordable and reasonable. The break even point for the annual meeting is

approximately 250 delegates and fewer than this will result in a loss. BADS finances are now more secure than they have been for some time (thanks to our hard working council) but one ill-conceived decision could easily plunge us into the red.

We often see suggestions from delegates on the annual post-conference feed back forms, which I may add are all exhaustively read and analysed! However, if you know of an excellent venue you feel may have been overlooked, do let us know! The shortlist for 2010 is now complete and a decision will be taken shortly, but let's have some ideas for 2011, our 21st anniversary year.

DOUG MCWHINNIE