

Fellow Rotarians, and in particular, Presidents Elect, Good Morning.

A very warm welcome to you all. As District Learning and Development Officer, Gus McDonald has just said, this is the next stage of preparing you for your year in office, a process which will finish with the District Assembly on 10th May in Glenrothes. Thereafter, it will be up to you to take all the messages and lessons on to your Clubs, to prepare your committees and indeed all of your members for the Rotary year 2009-10.

This morning, I want to tell you something of the personalities involved in leading Rotary at the various levels, and of their aspirations for the Rotary year 2009-10.

The year ahead will be a very special one in many ways, but in one particular respect it will be unique. For the first time ever, the World President of Rotary International is a Scot – John Kenny from the Rotary Club of Grangemouth. John is well known to people in this District, going back to the days when he was District Governor of District 1020, immediately to the south of us, and later on, President of RIBI. He will preside over 1.2 million Rotarians, in some 200 countries, in 530 Districts, covering 33,000 communities.

John is a canny Scot, a lawyer, and he thinks deeply about everything he says and does. This is clear from his slogan for 2009-10, “**The Future of Rotary is in your Hands**”. He had become

concerned over the years at the developing attitude which said, “Rotary will do all sorts of things, then many sat back and waited for someone else, somewhere, to do it”. He wants the responsibility to make things happen, to come right back into the hands of the individual Rotarian.

His intention in the year ahead is not to make great changes in Rotary's targets. However, he does wish to see the existing ones pursued vigorously, and, where possible and appropriate, brought to a successful conclusion. He wishes to press on with the PolioPlus campaign, seeking a conclusion in the next 3 years. In this, he will be aided by the huge, additional, financial inputs of \$155 million from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and £100 million and 100 million euros from the British and German Governments respectively. The Gates Foundation will have given a total of 255 million dollars. That is commitment in any ones language.

However, this brings further challenges for Rotary, in that much of the additional money from Bill Gates is again conditional on Rotary matching the award dollar for dollar. He firmly believes that it is only through the involvement of Rotary that a successful outcome will be ensured. However, our Rotary \$100 million Challenge has just become a \$200 million Challenge – to be achieved by 30 June 2012. However, I don't wish you to be dismayed by this challenge. Of the original \$100 million which had to be matched by Rotary, almost \$80 million of this has already been raised.

John Kenny is well aware of the raising of Rotary's financial targets but is confident that these can be achieved. He is equally clear however, that these should not be met by Rotarians simply putting their hands in their own pockets, but by persuading the general public to be more supportive of such worthy causes.

John's other targets are Water Aid, the Health, Hunger, and Literacy campaigns. As he so succinctly puts it, “every human being has a right to fresh, safe drinking water”, and “no one should ever go to bed hungry”. He sees the above campaigns leading to proper education, an understanding of the world's problems, and hopefully, through this, the lasting peace in the world which everyone desires.

Finally, John is passionate about the need to increase membership. He wonders, as do many who know the figures, why the population of the world has increased by three quarters of a billion in the last 10 years but Rotary membership has changed not one iota. He has challenged every Rotarian to bring in at least one new Rotarian in the coming year. So, that is me and every Rotarian in this room. If Rotary could double its membership to 2.4 million, the impact would be massive, especially on its ability to carry out all sorts of humanitarian programmes. It would be unrealistic to expect this to happen instantly, but every Club should ensure that it is at least matching its membership losses with gains, and seeking a net gain of at least one member. Looking at some Clubs, this actually

means a need to bring in 7-8 new members in the coming Rotary year.

Turning to the President Elect of RIBI, David Fowler is another very committed Rotarian. Quietly spoken but highly organised, he endorses all of John Kenny's objectives and, likewise, does not wish to see a whole host of new initiatives.

However, he is strongly supportive of the new UK initiative, **Thanks for Life-Rotary Day on 23 February 2010**, which aims to bring Rotary to the notice of the wider world, especially in relation to PolioPlus. It should be a wonderful opportunity to extol the merits of Rotary membership, and David would like to see every club involved. Similarly, he would like to see every Club working towards, and gaining a Presidential Citation.

And lastly, my own objectives

I have made my own analysis of Rotary on an international, national and local basis and I find aspects of it no longer fit for purpose. In particular, I see a lack of continuity and forward planning. So, we need to be looking at things such as Strategic Planning. If we don't know where we would like to get to, then we will never arrive.

In relation to organisation, it was stated by RI, but not with a huge amount of conviction, that the Club Leadership Plan should be implemented by all Clubs by 2009-10. However, they left Clubs free to decide how, or even if, it should be implemented. Hardly clear guidance! But major changes in this

are now being implemented. Both RI and RIBI are now switching their management structures to be in line with the Club Leadership Plan, so I believe it will help if Clubs are in tune with this. If you are unaware of the CLP, there are various documents available to you. In addition, the slides from my presentation on this topic last year, are still available on the District Web site. Just look on the right hand side menu, click on Downloads, then click on the CLP presentation.

Communications have been a burning issue for many years throughout Rotary. By this, I don't simply mean things such as the methods used, but the much more serious matter of people actually talking with each other, responding with information as and when required, and in a number of instances, simply doing someone the courtesy of a reply when they are invited to attend an event. I was appalled that 11 Clubs did not even bother to respond to the invitation to attend the most recent District Council meeting in Dundee, let alone give an apology for non-attendance. Would we be happy if this was the response from people we had invited to a dinner party?

In terms of the mechanisms of communication, the new District system has been in use for almost two years now, and is working well, though there are a few small problems to be ironed out. It will continue to be in use as far ahead as I can see. There is no new "White Knight" of a system, waiting just over the hill to come galloping to our

assistance. If there are problems with the existing system, then these can and will be resolved by talking to the District Communications team, which I am about to expand considerably. This system is not frozen in time. I have great ambitions for its further development over the next two years. I hope to see progress on such matters as having the District Directory and perhaps even the District 1010 Magazine produced in electronic form rather than in hard copy. This alone would save the District many thousand of pounds. We have already reached a stage in the world, not just in Rotary, where there can be no turning back to outmoded systems, including snail mail. The costs of doing so would not be supportable.

As to my other objectives, I wish to ensure that we maintain our long standing commitment to support cancer treatment and research, that we make a major effort to expand the youth side of Rotary, Interact and Rotaract, and that we see genuine progress on environmental matters. On the last of these particularly, I would like to see every Club having some involvement. It might be cleaning up some rubbish filled corner, helping some local environmental initiative by another group such as a school, planting trees and so on.

It will be an interesting time ahead, some might say a difficult one, because of the world economic situation. Some might even see the coming year as the worst for Rotary to be operating in. I see the converse. There has never been a better opportunity for Rotary to show its worth. Nothing is

ever gained from being negative. We have to look at the challenges and find ways to overcome them. If you need an example of the success which is possible, just look at this year's Comic Relief programme which has raised far more money than ever before.

So what will be your role and responsibilities. I hope that as I have been talking, you will have been picking up a flavour of what things are important. Also, in your Presidents pack, there are various documents including an Aide Memoire which encapsulate many of the important points. You have a number of responsibilities – to RI, to RIBI, to District, to your own Club and its members, and not least to the people with whom you will work outwith Rotary in a variety of different activities. You need a good team to achieve this. However, above all else, never lose sight of the fact that you are the leader of your Club. Of course you will discuss matters with your Club Council and your members, but in the end of the day you have to chart the course and provide not just the direction but the drive and the enthusiasm. Above all, you have to motivate. You will have to learn what approach works best with different people. Praise, exhortation, challenge are all legitimate tools to make your year a success. You can do this! By your ideas, your actions, and your enthusiasm, you can work wonders. You are the President of your Club and your members will want you to succeed.

In addition to this, there will be responsibilities. The buck does stop with the President, but this is not to say that you have to do everything yourself. Do not be afraid to delegate. There are many first class people in Rotary who are only too eager to help if you just ask them. So, be aware of matters such as Health and Safety, the care which must be taken when dealing with children and vulnerable adults, and ensure that you have the people appointed to deal with such matters.

Lastly, ensure that you and your Club are involved in District affairs. There is much factual information to be gained from attending District Council meetings and so on. The District Council is you, not some body of faceless individuals sent to impose actions from above. If you are not there, or someone delegated to attend in your place, then your Club will be unrepresented in the decision making process of the District. I also urge, again, that every President, and certainly every Club is represented at the District Conference. RI accords such matters the highest priority. It has been said by more learned Rotarians than I, that you do not really know about Rotary until you have attended a District Conference, Experience over the years has persuaded me that this is absolutely true. Not only is it a week end of learning, but it is one of wonderful fellowship – a chance to get to know your fellow Rotarians that it is difficult to find in any other way. In particular, it is a great opportunity for new Rotarians, all of whom should be encouraged to attend. As a practical step towards all this, I would

urge you to appoint a specific individual in your Club who can liaise with Ian Fraser of the Conference organising committee, and who can be the focus for persuading as many of your members as possible to attend the Conference. I would also like to see someone in every Club fulfilling a similar role in getting as many of your team as possible to attend the District Assembly in Glenrothes on Sunday 10 May. It is there that they will learn all about the programme for the coming year for their own particular areas of responsibility. There is no doubt that those who do not attend, or where the Club is only represented by one or two people, will struggle in the year ahead. They will have difficulty in planning their year and, indeed, as a consequence, their Club Assembly can turn into an unmitigated disaster. For your sake, make sure that this does not happen on your watch. We have got out of the habit of attending and supporting such events. We need to get back into the habit.

Lastly, in the packs given to each of you today, there is much of value both to you and your Club members. One item in particular does require your fairly immediate attention. This is the Club Membership Goal Form which you have to complete and return to me by 1 May 2009. This asks you to indicate your current membership and your projected net member increase. In this, I ask you to be optimistic but realistic. Please be assured that it will not be a hanging offence if a different figure emerges at the end of the year. We none of us are possessed of absolute foresight.

Lastly, may I wish you all a wonderfully successful year and one that you can look back on with a great deal of satisfaction and pleasure.