



THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF NATAL

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2018

Mr Mike Moncur, the president of the Society presented his annual report to the AGM, held in the Grill room on 8th November.

AN OVERVIEW

The Royal Agricultural Society generated a pre-tax surplus for the year of R1 413 855 (against R1 529 050 in 2016); this despite the omnipresence of stagnant economic growth, depressed business sentiment and ongoing political uncertainties.

Accepting that 'cold-comfort' is not a crutch; relative to peers in the conferencing and exhibition industry, the Society has performed reasonably well.

Whilst both the Royal and Witness Garden shows were deemed by exhibitors and the public alike to have been a success, the 2017 Royal Show's annualized contribution to revenue remained flat; this being the primary driver underlying the end result.

On a positive note, Conferences and Functions experienced a pleasing 8,3% growth.

The Society continues to keep a tight rein on expenditure, which at 4,8% is somewhat below that of the CPI. Indeed, had it not been for the unexpected cost of having to reinforce the Dorpspruit River bank by way of gabions, year-on-year cost increases would have equated to a commendable 2,9%.

OUTLOOK

Whilst the Royal Agricultural Society, and the Royal Show in particular, are deemed reputable brands; exogenous factors beyond the Society's control will continue to play an important role in determining the future.

Show business is at best tenuous, and this is especially the case in an exhibition based industry, where limited client marketing budgets determine success or otherwise.

In the circumstance, it stands to reason that if and when the current fatigued economy experiences a turnaround, domestic demand increases and political uncertainties dissipate, osmosis will only at that stage ensure a return to meaningful confidence.

Positives

- Both the Royal and Witness Garden Shows were adjudged to have been successful, and despite initial concerns, the Livestock Section of the Royal Show saw increased participation.
- Although business conditions remain challenging, the Royal Showgrounds continues to be a preferred venue for conferences and events. In 2016/2017, this again included the UKZN Graduation, the KZN Nurses Graduation and the Opening of the Provincial Legislature.
- For the fourth consecutive year, the Society was awarded a BEE Level 2 Certificate of Compliancy.
- An understanding to grant Prospect SA a contractual right to conduct a Feasibility Study and enjoy a First Right of Refusal in respect of an extension to the Bank Park, was agreed to.
- The upgrade of the Society's cattle handling facilities was completed.

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- With the approval of the AGM of 9 November 2016, and by way of excising provisions abrogated by disuse, the Royal Agricultural Society of Natal's Constitution was updated.
- 2016/2017 saw the substantial refurbishment of the Rabbit Hall, the completion of the Royal Food Court upgrade and the enlarging of Gate 8 to cater for heavy duty vehicles. Also, the Total Tower (in the Cattle Section) was reinforced and subjected to a major revamp.
- The Sheep Section saw a new slab being laid on the grassed portion of land to the south-west of the clubhouse, thereby creating a second judging ring.
- By way of gabions, the reinforcement of the Dorpspruit north bank, adjacent to KFC Tower, was completed.
- The 2017 Royal Show was selected to host the Ile de France Nationals.
- First National Bank and East Coast Radio joined Coca Cola Beverages as corporate sponsors of the 2017 Royal Show.
- Following inordinately high water consumption spanning a lengthy period, several major leaks and what appeared to be an inadvertent supply to a third party, was discovered and rectified.
- July 2016 saw the Olympia Hall being aesthetically converted into a 'Cathedral'; the purpose being to host 3 000 congregants from around Southern Africa and the Vatican to the 200th anniversary of the Roman Catholic OMI Order.
- The main arena was the selected venue for the funeral service of Roman Catholic Bishop, Barry Wood. Despite inclement weather, the solemn but regal occasion saw around 4 000 mourners attending.
- After a break of three years, the Witness returned to their previous Royal and Garden Show exhibition facility adjacent to the main arena, by way of a Security of Tenure agreement.
- The Society's efforts to increase Royal Show weekday attendance were, by way of certain 'Super Friday' inducements, successful.
- In line with the longstanding request of farmers, the Royal Show Livestock programme was curtailed by one day, with the Interbreed and Gold Cup presentations taking place on the Wednesday as opposed to the Thursday of the show.
- 2017 was also the first occasion that sheep, goats and cattle participated jointly in the Gold Cup Parade and Presentation.
- The Society's website has been substantially updated.
- With attendance standing at 18 002, an increase of 842 on a four day event in 2015, the 2016 Garden Show was deemed to have been a success.
- To enhance the accuracy of the foot count, and curtail scams, the Society made a decision to replace the identity card with biometric (fingerprint) access.
- Following a decline in service standards on the part of the previous incumbent, it became necessary to appoint Occusec to oversee future security requirements. They creditably dealt with the complexities of the 2017 Royal Show in an admirable manner.

2018 ROYAL SHOW: 25 MAY TO 3 JUNE



Every effort is being made to structure a full and interesting Program, and further information will be shared soon.

2018 GARDEN SHOW: 7 to 9 SEPTEMBER



In 2017 the Royal Agricultural Society's feature garden was awarded Gold.

