NAJ Chair, Harriet Kelsall explains how the Association is taking steps to make members 'Fit for the Future' and the evolution of the committee structure.

I'm Part of This; I Want to be Involved



Jewellery is about telling a story. The luxury products we mine, manufacture, create and serve, form a key symbolic element in the story the consumer wants to tell of their life. Our own design stories, how each piece is made, the people who mine the precious materials and how they're formed, all contribute to helping the consumer understand, recognise and celebrate their, or a loved one's, current chapter. Together as an industry, when we integrate our own stories, we create an abiding sense of creativity/ belonging/ community amplified through one single voice.

While we continue to be more adventurous in jewellery manufacture, processes and ultimately selling, the world around us is changing. Buying behaviours, competing trends and societal shifts can and are impacting on how the industry contracts, and it has never been more important for the jewellery industry to collaborate and come together as a united community.

The first step in this unifying 'need' is now being finalised, following the formation of the National Association of Jewellers in 2015. Its new brand is being embedded, and existing internal structures and processes continue to be challenged and refined. The NAJ is governed by its National Committee, which understands that the Association needs to both support AND drive its members and stakeholders to realise the potential of jewellery in the UK.

Our membership encompasses suppliers, designers and manufacturers, through to retailers and expert valuers, as well as those supplying services to the jewellery community. The NAJ requires a networked governance structure that enables representatives from all these areas to work with National Committee colleagues, to drive forward key agendas for NAJ members and supporters.

The NAJ's motto is 'fit for the future'. We must champion professionalism, we must influence, and we must engage more members more often. We must bring our different types of members together for their mutual benefit and we must help them develop with their connected supply chain, particularly consumers. This isn't about standing still and waiting, this is about creating power networks to harness expertise, it's about pushing as a collective to better understand our market to help make better decisions, and more than ever it's about being one single voice for the industry, and an active one at that.

We benefit from strong foundations when it comes to power networks, such as our existing Committees/Steering Groups for IRV, Better Business and Education, as well as strong collaborative relationships with sister organisations within the jewellery sphere. We're learning from what works well and changing our structure as we evolve, integrate and bolster the existing volunteer formations with two shiny new additional groups targeting industry networking and events, and consumer focus.

Collectively, the NAJ's National Committee firmly believes the five steering groups enable the Association to deliver impact by and for the membership, and we hope, have fun doing it.

Neither I or the National Committee are about to try and set an over-prescriptive scope for each of the Steering Groups, but we do want to encourage colleagues making up the groups to ask questions, identify where problems lie and start the 'metaphorical ball' rolling themselves. The new advisory structure aims to engage more people more often and to add further credibility and value to our voice and collective authority.

I've no doubt that if you want to help drive positive change for our industry, being part of the NAJ's working groups – alongside other passionate jewellers – is where you need to be. Our industry is jam-packed with creativity, brilliance and inspiration of which I'm so proud to be a part. When this is supported by commercial savviness, the jewellery industry is a great place to be.



Education

With an increasingly competitive education offering within the jewellery market, how the NAJ supports career progression needs to be considered in order to ensure we offer a stable pathway for the jewellers of tomorrow. We must set the agenda and work with others to deliver against it.

Networking and Events

Getting members together to share experiences and celebrate excellence is central to the Association's strategic intent and also enables the above activities to be communicated to members and supporters.

Professional and Technical Standards and IRV (PTSI)

The NAJ needs to ensure that clear guidance and standards for both individuals and businesses are present, maintained, and most importantly, followed.

Consumer Focus

Understanding, advising and educating consumers is a key responsibility of a trade association. This group will drive a campaign to understand and influence consumer behaviour, both on wanting to buy more jewellery, but also where from.

Better Business

The existing steering group will soon publish the Better Business framework, and now needs to consider how to educate the membership on what a good business looks like and prompt it to use the valuable resources within the NAJ site.

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