The National Association of Jewellers

To the NAJ Membership,

Up until this point

The jewellery industry we all belong to has a proud history and long-standing tradition of craftmanship, creativity and luxury. As jewellers, for hundreds of years we've played a key role in helping society express love, devotion and remembrance, as well as personal meaning.

To say that 2019-20 has been challenging would be a vast understatement. First Brexit and now COVID-19 – but before we talk about what we face now, let's first look at how we, the NAJ, have arrived at this point in time with just shy of 2000 jewellery companies in membership, representing 26,000 individuals across the UK, Ireland and internationally.

We're proud to be the industry body where Manufacturers, Suppliers, Designers, Retailers and Valuers all come together to do better business.

I hope you've been able to recognise how hard our evolving association, has been working this last year to drive forward our big picture strategy of supporting members to be fit for the future. We have re-built the way our volunteers work with the National Committee and recruited industry support to ensuring the Association is best placed to listen to all facets of the jewellery industry:

- The Education Steering group continue to champion and drive forward the NAJ's JET assets with continuous improvement of the JET pathway, including a new introductory 'JET Essentials' programme. Attention now turns to the Certificate of Appraisal Theory Qualification. The COVID-19 safety certificate, which is free to all NAJ members and their teams, was put together in record time and has been really helpful for the industry.

- The Better Business Steering Group reformed and most recently shared the Better Business toolbox with all of the Jewellery industry in a bid to support members understand what Better Business is, and in doing so demonstrating what it means to be a responsible NAJ member.

- The now re-established Valuations Steering Group have made a big impact to the culture of the IRV already. Replacing 'monitoring' with 'review', introducing associate and student categories and altogether ensuring information flows into and out of the IRV has been something we've been delighted to observe. It was important we listened to the NAJ Valuation community, to what they wanted and we're sure that with the future plans coming together, even more NAJ members will want their team members to join the IRV.

- The Consumer Focus group delivered a body of consumer research to understand why people buy and do not buy jewellery and the group now moves onto demonstrating how that research can be used to influence buying behaviours as a collective industry. More on this in the coming weeks as we return to what can only be described as a 'new normal'.
- The Professional and Technical Standards group have brought through improvements to our founding and core documentation, the NAJ code of conduct, and have also progressed the Gold Standard.

- The Meeting and Events Group now under the leadership of Chris Sellors take stock of just what current events have done and will do the networking side of the Jewellery industry, as we lead up to the (previously postponed) NAJ Summit in 2021.

We would like to thank all of the volunteers of the steering groups for the time and commitment they've put in to the cause; to protect, promote and prepare Jewellers under our 'fit for the future' mission.

In addition to our volunteers, the small (but mighty) staff team continue to implement benefits, products and services which add value and make a difference to your business. Some highlights include:

- Improved communication with you through website development, overhaul of the jeweller magazine and digital newsletters, introduction of the 2020 yearbook (later this year), renewed coverage on consumer facing social media platforms and a full calendar of NAJ live events across the UK, the NAJ Awards in December, The Valuers' Conference, all culminating into the NAJ Summit in June – now moved to 2021.

- Enhancement of core qualifications such as JET Certificate and JET Diploma.

- Launched the Created in the UK scheme to champion British manufacturing and it's exciting to now see the mark and logo appearing on products and in marketing collateral.

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- Represented the membership at worldwide conventions and exhibitions including CIBJO Dubai, JIS Miami, Atlanta Now, Inhorgenta, and IIJS, and also in the UK supporting events including IJL, Jewellery, Watch and Fashion, BCTF, CMJ, Houlden and the Jewellery Cut.

- We continue to support important networks and activities that specific segments of our membership find extremely valuable including the JET Business Network for independent retailers, Safer Gems, Better Business support helplines, Design protection and an ever-increasing number of member to member offers.

Thank you so much to our amazing staff team, our external suppliers and supporting organisations who all continue to work tirelessly to ensure that the NAJ maintains relevance and continues to be the authority for the entire jewellery industry.

Stepping down as Chair

So now I am stepping down as chair as it is the end of my 2-year term.

Thank you too all of our amazing and hardworking volunteers on the National Committee who have served the membership so well and also supported me in my position for the two years of my term as the chair of the NAJ. It is such a privilege to sit at a table with all of these highly respected business leaders who put their hearts and souls into this organisation in order to help the industry. And I wanted to say a personal thank you to all of the army of volunteers in our steering groups who have also been a huge support in so many ways. I don't think many members realise how much time and effort these committed individuals put in to help everybody.

Thank you so much Simon Johnson for all that you have given. It feels like 5 minutes ago that I was working with you as your vice chair and now you have just spent the 2 years of my chairmanship as a key member of the Exco, Committee and the education steering group with enormous energy, enthusiasm and proactive, practical help to give. We will miss you on the National Committee but are delighted that you will be able to stay on the education steering group where your advice and endless good ideas are so valuable. Thank you for being a huge support and for always being there at the end of the phone after a bad day offering practical advice like "it is time for a glass of wine Harriet". Seriously though thank you for all that you have given and continue to give.

Thank you also to the wonderful and planet-brained Andrew Hinds who kindly let me twist his arm into staying on the National Committee for yet another year last year as I just couldn't imagine how to do this job without him being there whenever I have needed a balanced wholistic view and whenever I have stopped seeing the wood for the trees. The epitome of the NAJs values of honesty, integrity and professionalism. Also, whenever I have struggled to sum something up in an A4 side, Andrew has also been there to say the same thing much better in about 2 sentences as well!

I honestly know how I would have done this without both of you, Simon and Andrew always pushing for better opportunities to help the whole membership. I can't believe Andrew is finally managing to get away. Happily, he isn't going far though!

I also want to say a particular thank you to our president David Doyle who has been completely amazing offering so much time, support, help and energy whenever needed – and that has been needed an awful lot since January in particular. Without David this association would be so much poorer – thank you David.

And thank you of course to the wonderful Gary Wroe whose down to earth guidance of this association in the past has been hugely valuable. And he now represents the next step for the Association on its journey. Under Gary's stewardship, I know the NAJ will prosper with his experience and approach to excellence. Thank you so much Gary for everything – and for your endless support and for agreeing to take on the Chair.

Navigating COVID-19 and the 'essential' future ahead

The last three months have brought about very different challenges than we've known before, and for some jewellers the effects will be harder hitting and longer lasting than others. All bricks and mortar retailers have been closed for long periods, and manufacturers and suppliers have either reverted to skeleton staffing or like retailers closed until further notice.

Throughout the Coronavirus pandemic we have continued to support members with regular updates and most recently issued guidance for jewellery stores, warehouses and workshops which we will continue to update over the coming months. We've experienced more than 650 people sign up for our free JET Essentials Module and more than 2000 have taken part in our webinars since lockdown. Three times a week we've been hosting virtual coffee mornings which have proved popular for individuals to share their concerns and has helped focus all minds on what is important here and so far more than 250 people have joined in with them. Working with other organisations we have also established the Jeweller

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Support Network, something which we believe will be of great benefit to the industry even more than its hub of pooled resources has proved through the pandemic – this is a sign of things ahead, the need to work together.
We wrote and launched the COVID-19 Safety training certificate and since it launched just a fortnight ago, we have issued more than 1000 certificates so we know that we have given our members something they really needed at a time they really needed it.

What we do not know is the true extent to if and how consumers will change their behaviour to a 'new normal' society. However, what we do know is that the reasons why people buy jewellery will live on and in trying times society has taken to jewellery to show appreciation, longevity, and connection. we refer to the great depression in the late 1920's and more recent events in 2008.

Engagements, weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, christenings, graduations, friendships, celebrations, commemorations, thank yous and the 'just because' will continue to rely on jewellery to make memories special. Jewellery will also continue to be critical to many to boost confidence, either as a status symbol, decoration or to revel in personal expression.

Let's not be naive about this. Tough times are ahead and as a trade we must be able to move with them. As an Association we will invest the most of our time and resources into supporting members that have invested in us. Our motto is fit for the future and that's exactly what we're all geared up for; protecting, preparing and promoting our 2000 member companies.

As an Association we've put in place our 'essential strategy' which means our focus has narrowed to best support the membership in the immediate term. Gary will talk more about essential strategy later.

Yours Sincerely

Harriet Kelsall

Chair of the National Association of Jewellers

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