

**Accessible Retail AGM – 17 November 2021**

**Report of the CEO for the year 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021**

Throughout the year, the Covid pandemic seriously compromised AR’s work on behalf of its members.

The introduction of lockdown on 16 March 2020 and its reintroduction later in the year prevented us from being able to hold our usual programme of events including both the annual conference and the Christmas dinner.

The loss of income which resulted and the consequential need to control expenditure to ensure financial stability meant we had to scale back our research and lobbying activities.

Despite this, we monitored all consultations and announcements from government and other regulatory bodies to ensure that we presented the views of our members on the most important issues. Inevitably, though, this meant that we did not respond to some other consultations of relevant but lesser importance.

In particular, we responded to the Consultations on National Model Design Code and Revised NPPF and Supporting Housing Delivery and Public Service Infrastructure both of which, notwithstanding their title, contained proposals to effect major changes to the planning system

Importantly, we were represented on the committee set up by the Retail Sector Council to identify what steps need to be taken to enable retail to reopen when restrictions were lifted.

In addition to the above work, AR continued to regularly review planning appeals and court decisions, emerging trends in the retail industry and economic and employment metrics, so as to identify issues of potential concern to our sector.

Despite the issues which had to be confronted, AR maintained a membership of ???.

In summary,2020-2021 was a difficult year for all our four principal activities, but I am pleased to say our prudence paid dividends. The year 2021-2022 will not see a return to full normality, but AR is still a viable and potent trade body able to respond on your behalf to some key issues including Business Rates especially the frequency of revaluations and we look forward to a return to full normality in 2022.

Will McKee

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