
ANNUAL REPORT 2023

National Institute of Medical Herbalists



PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

2023



I wrote in my first President's Welcome, last year, about the importance of 'connection'. How re-establishing some of the connections we had lost during the pandemic and embedding the new ways we had adopted would help us to cement the Institute as a community of shared purpose.

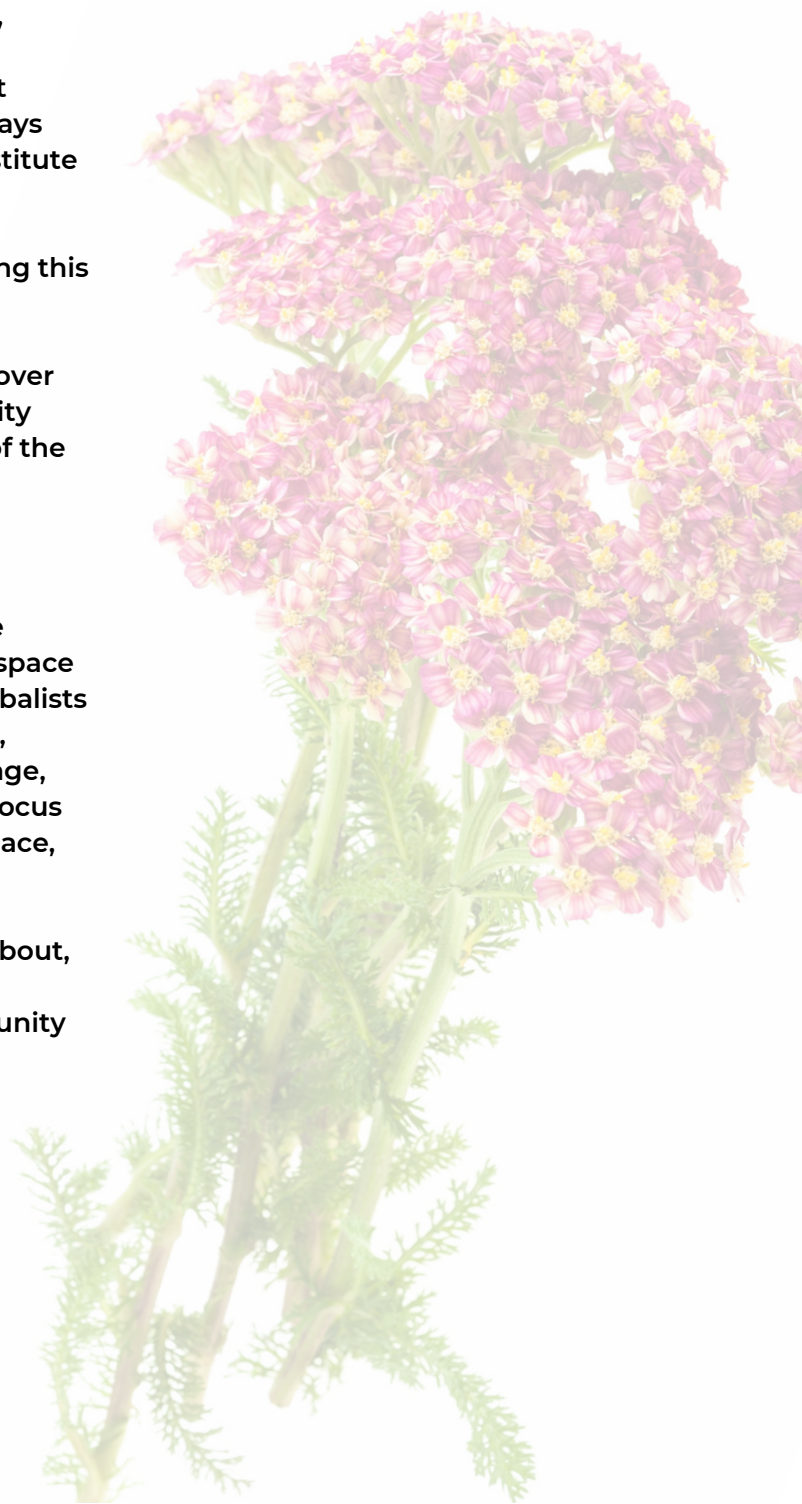
Well, I think we have all done pretty well in making this happen!

We have seen lots of projects coming to fruition over the last year where bringing our herbal community together to achieve more has been at the heart of the work.

As well as enabling our community to take itself forward, it is also very important that as an organisation we represent the herbal world more widely, and that we offer a welcoming, inclusive space for all herbalists. How we can welcome those herbalists who may not have felt the Institute was for them, encouraging them not only to join us but to engage, participate and shape our future has been a big focus this year. We still have more work to do in this space, but it is a central pillar of all we are doing.

Participation is something which I feel strongly about, and I look forward to working with more of our Members, Students, Associates and wider community over the coming year.

Robyn Soma
April 2023



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT



When the Institute Council joined me in Exeter last June for two days of planning and discussion, we talked a lot about the projects we were pursuing in the final year of our 2020-23 strategy, but also about some of the ambitions we had for the Institute as we began planning for our next strategy period.

With the Institute having gone from strength to strength over recent years, there was agreement that we should be optimistic and ambitious in our plans for the next three years - with our community growing in size, with greater collaboration across herbal medicine and the wider health and wellness space, and with the springboard of some of the fabulous progress we have made, we should be aiming to take the Institute, and medical herbalism, to the next level. I look forward to sharing this next strategy with you following this year's Exeter weekend later in May.

In the intervening year we have continued to deliver on our priorities - focussing on supporting great students to become great herbalists, to grow practices that work for them, and to help make sure that being part of herbal medicine is (as much as possible!) a joy. By delivering our Community Space and app to give our whole community a space to connect, launching our mentoring platform, creating our fantastic new Power of Plants Magazine, and creating our new 'Associate' category to embrace some of the herbal knowledge and insight in the wider community, we have, I hope, made a difference to your herbal lives, and made sure the Institute remains something you are proud to be a part of.

Of course, I couldn't discuss this past year without mentioning our very first herbal festival back in July - The Power of Plants Festival.

It was a genuine delight to meet so many of you there, some I'd met before our in-person hiatus in 2020 and 2021, some I'd got to know so well through our enforced time connecting virtually, and some who I met for the first time. Alongside our online Herbal Medicine Conference, it felt like such a fantastic addition to the herbal calendar to have the chance to get together with our tribe and enjoy sharing knowledge, catching up and being with plants. I can't wait to see lots of you again this July!

As always I'd like to thank the Institute Council for their support over the last year, and in particular to thank all of you who have been involved in our activity this year, from our festival volunteers, to all of our brilliant speakers and presenters, everyone who sits on our various panels and committees, all of you who help create some of our fabulous public facing content, and anyone else who has been part of what we do.

I'm privileged to be part of such an amazing community, and am looking forward to everything the next year brings!

James Wiltshire
April 2023



YOUR COUNCIL



Robyn Soma
President



Melinda McDougall
Vice President



Emma Barker
Honorary
General Secretary



Martin Schoenbeck
Honorary Treasurer



Katie Dobiesz
Director



Paula McCreary
Director



Mary Tassell
Director

The Institute's Council has ultimate accountability for the organisation, but it delegates its authority on a number of matters to sub-committees including:

- **Executive Committee** – operational decision making and strategic proposals
- **Professional Standards Committee** – protecting our Members, their patients and the public
- **Finance and Risk Committee** – protecting the Institute's financial sustainability

STRATEGY UPDATE

Advancing our profession

Our vision:

“A world where herbalists provide a recognised and valued healthcare option.”

Our purpose:

- To champion herbal medicine
- To promote the expertise of our Members
- To safeguard the public and maintain standards

Our priorities

- 1 **Supporting the provision of world class herbal education and development**
- 2 **Maintaining the highest professional standards across our membership**
- 3 **Promoting the recognition and advocacy of herbal medicine**
- 4 **Ensuring herbal careers are viable and rewarding**
- 5 **Enabling freedom and innovation in practice**

Our values

Collaboration:

We believe that we can achieve more by working with our Members, partners and other organisations. We will find common goals and build relationships for success.

Sustainability

We trust that the planet, its people and herbal medicine all have strong futures, and everything we do aims to secure and enhance them.

Diversity

We celebrate the diverse scope of herbal practice and its practitioners, and always operate with openness, integrity and inclusivity.

Clarity

We want everyone to understand what we do and how we do it, so are committed to making everything we do as clear and accessible as possible.

Visibility

We believe we make a difference, and we will continually seek to have our voices heard and secure herbal medicine's place in society.

Strategic priorities progress



EDUCATION

We have been working with schools and other accrediting bodies to make accreditation processes more consistent, giving schools more time to focus on delivering excellent courses.



EDUCATION

We have formally accredited the professional course from The School of Herbal Medicine, meaning we currently have four accredited courses, giving more choice to herbal students who want the highest quality education.



DEVELOPMENT

Our third Herbal Medicine Conference in its online format again saw amazing numbers of attendees joining us, showing that this more accessible format really makes a difference in allowing people to engage.



DEVELOPMENT

We have launched a new mentoring platform, not only improving the support offered to new Members, but also giving a structured process to help all Members access support for key areas of practice.



STUDENTS

We established the Institute's first Student Council, giving Students a voice on the Institute of the future, and a valuable new perspective on our decision making.

Strategic priorities progress



CONNECTION

Our first Power of Plants Festival was an real success, with 350 people coming together for a glorious weekend celebrating all the amazing things plants can do!



ENGAGEMENT

Alongside the festival, we also launched the Power of Plants Magazine, our quarterly magazine which all Members and students can get in printed form absolutely free!



DEVELOPMENT

We returned to in-person CPD, with full day events in London, Edinburgh and Shropshire, including our first ever livestreamed seminar, in our busiest year of CPD for some time.



SUPPORT

Our Member Assistance Programme continued to offer our community free personal support services 24/7 every day of the year. Being a herbal practitioner or student can be tough, and we want to offer the best support we can.



COSTS

To counter the current economic challenges we have held membership costs at the same level, and have committed to a full day CPD event on Menopause in October which will be free to all Members.

Strategic priorities progress



COMMUNITY

We created the new Associate category, helping to diversify our community, adding richness of opinions and experience, and giving new opportunities to learn and to share.



PROMOTION

We've worked with so many of our Members to support events they have been involved in, sending our banners, visuals and printed collateral all around the country to help engage people with what our Members do.



VISIBILITY

We have been working on a number of 'toolkits' to help Members to produce content promoting themselves and their work, whether that be at an in-person talk, virtual presentations or social media videos and posts.



COMMUNITY

We launched our online Community Space, with its own dedicated app, creating a space where our whole community can connect, share and grow.



VISIBILITY

We've use our social media and other digital channels to shine a spotlight on a huge number of our Members, amplifying the amazing work that so many of you are doing in advocating herbalism.

OUR COMMUNITY	
MEMBERS	595
STUDENTS	528

as at 15 April 2023

FINANCIAL REPORT

As it has been for all of you, your friends, family and patients, this last year has been a very tough financial environment for the Institute.

Inflationary pressures mean that everything, from the electricity used to power our computers, through venue hire for events, to postage and courier costs has increased. And of course where we work with partners to help deliver everything we do, they are experiencing the same pressures and some of that cost can get passed on to us.

We have been working throughout the year to minimise the impact of this, switching suppliers in some cases, or reducing what we do in others, but trying not to have any impact on the quality of what we offer to our Members. We were very pleased to be able to freeze our costs of membership for 2023, despite all of these challenges. At a time when our Members are seeing costs increase all around them, to be able to retain our subscription costs was very important to us. This freeze came on top of a reduction in membership costs for 2022, and the introduction of a 30% concession for members aged over 65 or with 30 years of membership.

You will note in your voting packs that we have proposed a change in our accountants this year. We are lucky to work with a number of amazing specialist support resources who help our team to deliver everything that they do. However our current accountants, who we have been with for a number of years, are now of such a size that they are unable to offer us the support we'd like, and their costs mean that we do not get value from them. Having been through a tender process to identify a local firm who will offer us much more, for much less, we are excited about working with them to maximise the value we can deliver to our membership.

After four consecutive years of the Institute returning a profit, including over £75,000 of profit in the last two years, our accounts for 2022 have posted a loss. As it is not part of our purpose to return profit for shareholders, it was our intention this year to post a loss, using some of the recent profits to bolster our

reserves, which now stand at over £313,000, whilst investing the rest back into benefits for our Members and the wider herbal community.

The reduction in membership fees for 2022, highlighted earlier, reduced our income, and due to the scheduled activity within the year we also saw a considerable reduction in income from CPD and accreditation activity compared to 2021. As people enjoyed spending time away from virtual events, we saw a slight drop in the revenue from our online conference, although this continues to be a successful, profitable event. 2021 also saw a sizeable payment for historic publishing royalties, which was not repeated last year. Our income therefore dropped by approximately £35k for the year, in line with projections.

One exceptional item in last year's accounts was our first in-person event since 2019 – our Power of Plants Festival in July. When the event was proposed, it was highlighted that it was likely to run at a loss, as understanding demand and what people wanted us to offer meant that it would take a few iterations to get it to be self-funding. However, Council were unanimous that the chance to build a new event that really responded to what our Membership wanted was an exciting opportunity and critical to our community. It was agreed to run it for three years to enable it to become financially viable, using some of the profit from the pandemic years to support this new, in-person event. The 2022 festival finished with a loss, in line with projections, of just over £16k, but the lessons we learned as organisers from the first year, and the interest shown in the event this year, mean that we are confident the event will become self-supporting within this timeframe.

Our administrative expenses for the year were slightly higher than projected, partly due to some repair work at our office, which we funded in the 2022 financial year, before receiving full insurer reimbursement in the first quarter of 2023. There were also some new costs (just under £12 per Member for the four issues per year) in producing the printed Power of Plants Magazine, which we felt added significant value to being a Member, and which is now beginning to generate its own income from sales, again with the intention of becoming self-supporting.

Our accounts are included for your consideration and if you have any queries please do contact us on info@nimh.org.uk. We will be prioritising pre-submitted questions for the AGM and are happy to share the answers in full to Members on the day.