



**Annual Report  
2013-14**

**Registered Office:** West One  
114 Wellington Street  
Leeds  
LS1 1BA

**Company No:** 05165006

**Charity No:** 1142415

**Accountants:** Parkinson Matthews LLP  
Cedar House  
35 Ashbourne Road  
Derby  
DE22 3FS

**Solicitors:** Andrew & Co Solicitors  
St Swithins Court  
1 Flavian Road  
Nettleham Road  
Lincoln  
LN2 4GR

**Bankers:** The Co-operative Bank - business  
Business Customer Services  
PO Box 250  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 6WT

And

Nationwide Building Society

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## **1. Message from the Chair**

It is with great surprise that I sit here presenting the annual report for the 2013-14 academic year as a week ago I was Vice-Chair Finance. I must first go on record as saying a huge thanks to both Phil and Mo for continuing on the NASMA board on an interim basis to allow further time for us to fill the additional roles on the NASMA board. They have both been a great asset to NASMA over the years and the work they have undertaken is greatly appreciated.

The 2013-14 year has (finally) seen the implementation of NASMA's accreditation scheme, which has been received very well so far. It's been fantastic to see so many 'accredited member' logos being attached to email signatures and is something we can all be proud of achieving. It really is a sign that we are the sector experts and can finally be recognised for the work we do within our profession.

The 2013-14 year has also been challenging for many different reasons, but I hope we are over the worst of it and can now build on the foundations set during the year. Not only have we restructured the composition of the NASMA Board but we are also in the process of restructuring our staffing arrangements with the NASMA Office. I am especially happy with our current staffing arrangements and hope you all agree that our current team of Catherine Pickles, Angela Greenbank and Tracey Whitehead are looking after the administrative needs of NASMA with some aplomb. Over the next few months the board will also be looking to add a training role to our staffing compliment to ensure that we can offer more training opportunities using new formats in future.

Looking forward over the next year, we will be creating a new NASMA business plan and looking for your feedback so we can implement a set of values to all NASMA related work. Whatever we decide our values to be, I am 100% sure we all already work to these values, but it can be a very useful exercise to publish and implement a set of values into our working systems.

**Rob Ellis Nov 2014**

## 2. NASMA Objects

The objects of NASMA are:

- I. to advance education about student finance and disseminate good practice in respect of all areas of student money and student finance advice; and
- II. to relieve the poverty of students through the promotion, provision, and support of professional money advice for higher education students in the FE and HE sectors, with particular emphasis on student finance, and student debt; and
- III. to provide advice, information and training to student money advisers, and administrators of discretionary funds and bursaries.

## 3. Structure, Governance and Management

NASMA is a membership organisation registered as a company limited by guarantee and also as a charity in England & Wales. NASMA's governing document is its Articles of Association, which are published on the Members' Area of the NASMA website.

The NASMA board of directors is a voluntary body, consisting of up to 12 members elected by the membership. Five of the directors hold executive positions (Chair, Vice Chair - Training, Vice Chair – Finance, Vice Chair – Governance and Operations and Vice Chair – Communication and Marketing). Responsibilities for committees and regional activity are allocated to individual directors. All NASMA Board members are also trustees of the charity.

Elections to the Board are conducted at the Annual General Meeting. In the event of the elections not achieving the required number of directors, the elected directors have the power to co-opt additional directors in order to ensure the Board is of the required composition as set out in the Articles of Association. Directors in executive positions serve an elected term of three years and other positions serve an elected term of two years (up to a maximum of two consecutive terms) and receive an induction to their role, with additional training where appropriate.

All directors are required to avoid and declare conflicts of interest. Financial and risk management are discussed under closed business at Board meetings which occur six times a year. The company has three employees (2.0 FTE); an Office Manager line managed by the Chair, and following a change in personnel at the end of the 2013-14 year, an office administrator and a new Finance Administrator line managed by the Office Manager.

## 4. The NASMA Board

In 2013-14 the NASMA Company Directors/Charity Trustees were:

Name of Board Member	Institution	Position
Phil Davis	Bishop Grossteste University	Chairperson
Mo Onyett	University of York	Secretary

Cheryl Milne	Reading University Students' Union	Training Officer and South West Co-ordinator
Rob Ellis	Swansea University	Treasurer and Welsh co-ordinator
Linda Martin	University of Ulster	Northern Ireland co-ordinator
Sukhie Mattu	Buckinghamshire New University	LASER Co-ordinator
James Quinn	University of Portsmouth	Communications
Jess Hawker	Leeds University SU	North East Co-ordinator and Office Liaison
Elaine Moore	University of Warwick	Midland Co-ordinator
Lorna Chambers	Manchester Metropolitan University SU	North West Co-ordinator

## 5. Sub Group Reports

Attached to the NASMA Board are a number of sub-groups. These groups are formed to consider specific elements of NASMA activity and are made up of Board members and in some cases other NASMA members will also participate. What follows is a report of their activity in 2013-14.

### Training and Development (T&D)

Members: Cheryl Milne (Chair), Phil Davis, Mo Onyett, Rob Ellis, Elaine Moore, Sukhie Mattu, Jo Gibson, Lynne Condell, Rachael Mather.

The biggest challenge for the Training and Development subgroup was the planning and organising of the Annual Conference. Planning started in November 2013, and the Training & Development subgroup, Training Officer, NASMA office and Board members worked hard to produce yet another high quality training event that remains so much more than just a conference. The sub group was delighted with the program on offer, which was developed after gathering feedback from members on their training needs. This year's conference saw the introduction of a number of new sessions on issues facing Student Money Advisers, reflecting the ever changing nature of the sector we work in.

Following an extremely busy year in 12/13, when NASMA accreditation was introduced, this has been a year of consolidation; encouraging members to prepare and gather evidence to gain Accredited Membership in 14/15. We are pleased to report that we now have a total of 141 accredited members and it is great to see so many email signatures with the new accredited logo.

As attendance at a regional meeting counts towards accreditation we have encouraged formal training within the Agenda. This also acts as an incentive for managers to release members to attend the meetings. Specific regional training this year is detailed within their minutes, but includes; DWP benefits, Turn2us, Best Energy, SFE appeals and Disabled Students Allowance.

Looking forward we recognize the challenges ahead and some of these are linked to members actually being able to attend training. In recognition of this we are going to look at delivering more training in the regions and hope to develop some on line training and resources. With the office re-structure underway we hope to employ to a new training officer role by early 2015.

### **Financial Capability Working Group**

Members: Lynne Condell, Tim Dixon, Jo Gibson (Chair), Ann Gordon, Hannah Hunter, Rachael Mather, Sukhie Mattu, Andrea Simpson

The Financial Capability Working Group was created in November 2010 when NASMA took over the management of the Money Doctors project from CfEB (now MAS). After the contract with MAS ended a decision was made by the Board in each subsequent year that due to the highly effective, positive and proactive work of the group, the Working Group would continue. The group meets up to three times per year, focussing on planning, developing, and reviewing financial capability activity including National Student Money Week (NSMW), the most significant NASMA annual activity outside the conference.

NSMW was created in 2010, with the first week taking place in March 2011. As part of our activity in 2013 we recommended a month of activity for 2014, badged as NSMW Goes Large!, and this was agreed by the NASMA Board.

The NASMA board conducted formal feedback to see whether we wanted to offer NSMW15 over 1 or 4 weeks. Following this feedback it was decided that we would revert back to just 1 week (week commencing 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015) but we know from the feedback that many NASMA members and external partners valued the opportunity to spread the activity across a range of weeks, with this in mind the Board are keen to ensure members are aware of the flexibility with NSMW15. Whilst it will only be running as a week from a central point of view, it is still up to institutions to decide the program that best suits them and we will be happy to continue promoting the great work undertaken by members outside of the week set for NSMW15.

Having worked very effectively as a group for the past four years, with a high number of NASMA members providing valuable input, we are pleased to see continued high levels of participation within the group now it is no longer a working group and has been merged with the Research Subgroup to create the Financial Capability and Research Subgroup. Financial Capability remains high up the Board's agenda and we hope with the creation of this new group we can continue the great work already started by this group.

## Communications Subgroup

Members: James Quinn (Chair), Rob Ellis, Jess Hawker, Lorna Chambers

What was the overall goal from the group this year? To have a much faster, responsive, user friendly and modernised website where members can navigate quicker and get better and easier access to the NASMA resources. We are pleased with the feedback from members so far and will continue to review the content of the website over the coming year to ensure it remains fresh and useful to members as well as being one of our key communication tools to externals.

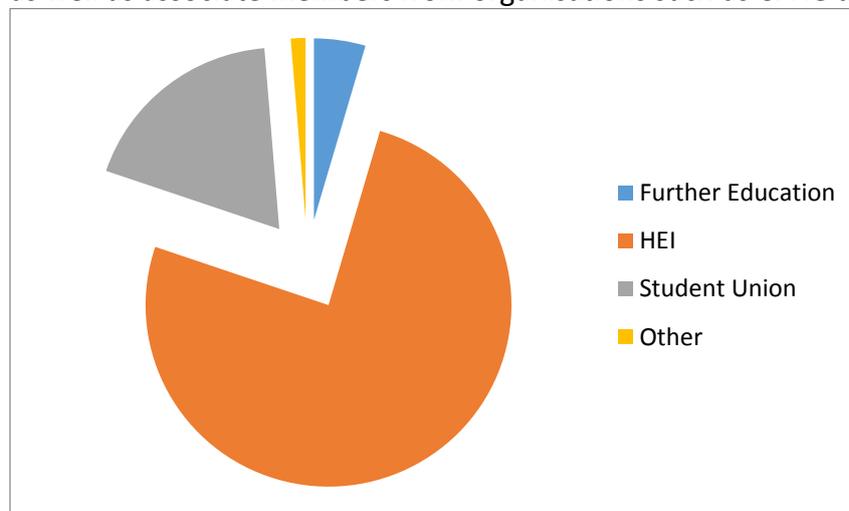
In addition to this we have worked on the NASMA e-newsletter. This has been a great success and we have received excellent feedback on it. Again it is a more efficient and appealing way to communicate our news and updates to members. This will hopefully be improved further in 2014-15 with the creation of a full communications plan to ensure members are kept much more up to date with what is happening within the Board and NADMA Office.

The new NASMA Board structure will come into place this year, and will involve a reshuffling of the Communication/ website subgroup with more defined roles such as a Communications Chairperson and a Website Co-ordinator. The challenge will be to get this group working to the best it possibly can and if that happens there can only be excellent developments ahead for NASMA members. The main challenge for next year will be making the website a success and ensuring members are getting value for money and this is something we are very excited about.

Working Group

## 6. NASMA Membership 2013-14

Membership for 2012-13 totalled 616, with representation from right across the sector in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Students' Unions and Further Education (FE) colleges, as well as associate members from organisations such as CPAG and the NUS.



## 7. Regional Round-Up

### LONDON & SOUTH EAST - 190 Members

Regional Co-ordinator: Sukhie Mattu

In our first meeting of the year, we shared information and exchanged experiences around the Energy Best Deal resource pack and usual beginning of term activities and issues surrounding student finances and hardship matters.

Discussions around how institutions were going to engage with the Money Week 'Going Large' were also held.

Part of our second meeting, we had a presentation delivered by a DWP representative about Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment. We also discussed the boards' proposal about restructuring the Board set-up, Regional Roles and Accreditation log updates and progress reports.

### MIDLANDS - 121 Members

Regional Co-ordinator: Phil Davis

It has been a pleasure to work with, and represent colleagues in the Midlands and extremely rewarding to meet the enthusiastic professional members working to further NASMA's goals. During this year the majority of Midlands members described experiences of frustration with the SLC appeals and complaints procedures – most notably several examples of appeals which were not treated as appeals, with no further outcome except to be referred back to standard assessors – and sometimes with no further action. (This matter was subsequently raised via the SLC Operations Group).

Members continue to discuss best practice with regards delivery of ALF, especially in the face of ever tighter budgets.

The spring meeting consisted of a lengthy discussion of how NSMW might be delivered in future, with many Midlands HEIs interested in as flexible an approach as possible, including termly events.

The Midlands spring term meeting hosted an excellent overview of welfare reform from the Midlands DWP representative, Karen Whitehouse. This was welcomed both as an effective refresher on the subject, as well as reassurance that the roll-out of universal credit is not yet having a large impact in our sector. Karen also delivered an excellent overview of the Personal Independence Payment, highlighting some of the current issues with workplace capability assessments.

This year we said farewell to Jane Whitehead (Coventry), who had previously been on the NASMA Board and regional contact for the Midlands. Both Elaine Moore, and myself are due to end our terms of office in July. So, whilst we've had a high level of engagement from the region in recent years, the future is looking more uncertain. It would be great if the region (with such a significant number of members) could continue to be involved both in the work of the NASMA Board, and to continue to have regular and well-attended meetings.

## **NORTH WEST - 73 Members**

**Regional Co-ordinator: Lorna Chambers**

The NW regional meetings went really well in 2013/14, with a significant amount of membership engagement and a few new members to add to the pot. As a membership led organisation, we are nothing without membership engagement so appreciate all your efforts to participate and contribute when you can.

The majority of members felt that it has been a really difficult year, from the often limited student engagement in student financial capability events (such as NSMW) to the shock cuts by HEFCE to the Access to Learning Fund. However members from Lancaster, Bolton and Manchester remained positive offering really innovative NSMW ideas to encourage other members to develop student engagement and all members were thinking proactively about the cuts and contacting the relevant staff within their institutions to ensure the continuation of some type of financial hardship support for their students. This undoubtedly shows that in times of adversity, money advisers come out fighting!

The NW members found the Energy Best Deal training (Citizens Advice public awareness campaign) really useful and by the time this is published, hopefully the Applying for Grants and Trusts from Turn to Us will be as successful. We look forward to more training within regionals as time out of the office is so precious to us all.

Condell and Jan Barnes hosted a successful training event in Liverpool on healthcare course funding in February, where members were encouraged to bring case studies that they wanted to discuss to ensure they achieved all the learning outcomes relevant to their role.

The region has been frustrated that evidence submitted to SFE to support compelling personal reasons cases was still being attached to DSA applications so they were encouraged to send any examples they had to Lynne or the NASMA office.

## **NORTH EAST - 93 Members**

**Regional Coordinator: Jess Hawker**

This year has been another busy year for the region and time has flown by. Our hot topics included Welfare reform updates, Energy Best deal and Student Finance England appeals.

At our meetings we had Welfare Reform training which was very helpful, as we got to 'ask the expert' when Mal Bateman from the Teesside Welfare Rights Unit joined us to talk about common issues and complex areas for advice for our students. We also got a heads up about what's in store when Universal Credit is rolled out. We welcomed Danielle from the NASMA office, who gave a walk through all the Energy Best Deal materials and how you can use them to help student save money on energy. Two colleagues from Student Finance are coming to discuss the appeals process in our final regional meeting of the year. I anticipate this to be very useful to the region as well.

Next year the main areas of development will be about sharing best practise in a climate of change. With the changes to ALF, DSA and introduction of UC – we need to continue to communicate what works well and what to watch out for. One idea we shared this year was

that NASMA could run a specialist consultancy in a similar way to the Middlesbrough Advice Network. This is something members felt would be beneficial and something that could be looked into on the longer term.

Thanks to all the members in the region for your participation this year and looking forward to 2014/15!

### **NORTHERN IRELAND – 9 Members**

**Regional Co-ordinator: Linda Martin**

The NI region has been quite quiet this year. By the time of conference we will have held three regional meetings, which continue to attract high attendance figures. Time and resourcing constraints regrettably led to us not being able to run our previous 'NASMA regional conference'. We have committed to another event in 2015.

The welfare cuts legislation has been delayed in NI, which has left us in 'no man's land' – we are all attending training both locally and nationally in this area but with no firm idea when it will be introduced here.

Many of us are looking forward to receiving our NASMA accreditation.

### **SCOTLAND - 32 Members**

**Regional Co-ordinator: Ann Gordon**

During this year we have seen an increase in use of pay day loans by students to 'fill the gap' (waiting for wages from p/t jobs; high utility bills; deposits for new rental accommodation etc). We have experienced an increase in student's either experiencing mental illness for the first time at university, or coming to university with a pre-diagnosed condition. Gambling (especially online) appears to be another issue. SAAS plus one funding, Impending changes to PG funding, the PSAS scheme and the independence referendum have also been hot topics.

We have not had any specific NASMA training this year and have little to report on NSMW, although this was discussed at the regional meetings and would be considered next year. Travel and distance to NASMA training/committees/board meetings are prohibitive and do not encourage anyone from our region participating in these kind of events; we feel this needs to be taken into account if NASMA is serious about the engagement of all regions. Looking to the future we would like to develop a NASMA Scotland identity and have a NASMA Scotland Conference. This would focus on Scottish issues, especially in light of Referendum and Financial Capability. We feel our regional members are best placed to assist each other in our region & look towards increasing NASMA's representation/profile within local government on policies we are clearly linked with.

### **SOUTH WEST - 58 Members**

**Regional Co-ordinator: Cheryl Milne**

This has been a quiet year in the SW region, but those who came to the Spring meeting in Portsmouth generally agreed it was worth the day out of the office. Unfortunately the Autumn meeting at Reading was cancelled, as only 2 members were able to attend. Members who attended the Spring meeting enjoyed the opportunity to network and

compare experiences. During the year the members have raised a number of issues including; concerns about the quality of SFE advice (students given incorrect information by SFE call centre and poor advice on Facebook) and CPR request issues. Members have suggested that SFE create a form for CPR requests and we also continue to hope the Students Loan Company will consider producing a Service Level agreement with their customers (students).

Engagement with National Student Money Week 'Goes Large' varied considerably. Portsmouth, Reading, Solent and Bristol all had activities and were happy to share their experiences with the group at the March meeting.

In March a DWP update was presented by Alan Laney (DWP National Partnership team) and included updates on Claimant commitment, Universal credit, and Personal Independence payment. It was very worthwhile and informative. We hope to have training from turn2us in June. A number of members are working towards accreditation, and we look forward to hearing more about this at Conference.

Thank you to the SW members who hosted our meetings and to those who took time out of their busy lives to attend the meetings. The meetings have been a great opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from colleagues. We continue to look for new ways to meet and network as the size and geography of the region causes some difficulties.

## **WALES - 40 Members**

**Regional co-ordinator: Rob Ellis**

The hot topics on the Welsh region this year have been the Student Finance Wales Modernisation and the Financial Contingency Fund. We were very disappointed at the Welsh Governments decision scrap the Financial Contingency Fund and were appalled at the fact we were informed only 11 days before the start of the new academic year. This led to various letters being sent to both the Welsh Government, Assembly members and University VC's to campaign against the decision and to try and ensure Institutions replaced the Fund to ensure this did not adversely affect students in Wales. We were pleased that the Welsh Government postponed the scrapping of the fund for another year. Whilst we are still disappointed to lose the Fund it at least provides institutions time to budget for new funds over a more adequate period of time.

We continue to liaise with SFW and the Welsh Government in regards to modernisation with the aim of ensuring issues can be tackled and resolved in a timely and effective manner.

The Welsh region organised a Universal credit and welfare reform training session in September which was solely attended by Welsh members. This was not only an extremely useful training day but being provided with Welsh specific information was also a massive plus. All regional members are hoping to become accredited this year and a lot of discussion has taken place about how this is possible with training budgets also dwindling.

## **8. Accreditation of members**

During the 2013/14 academic year, members were asked to maintain and record their accreditation logs to ensure they can become accredited members for the 2014/15 academic year. This has led to 141 members being accredited which equates to just under 25% of its members. We hope that more members will successfully achieve accreditation over the following year after seeing what a positive thing it is to achieve.

The creation of the NASMA accredited logo has ensured that accredited members are given an identity and this will continue in future years. The accreditation will continue to be reviewed and amended to ensure we can build the accreditation scheme to ensure it is better and more worthwhile for our members.

## **9. Risk Management**

The NASMA Board has given consideration to the major risks to which the charity is exposed and have satisfied themselves that systems or procedures are established in order to manage those risks.

The risk register has been reviewed and monitored regularly during 2013-14 by Board members to ensure risks are managed effectively. This has led to a number of changes over the last year including:

- The creation of a NASMA reserves policy
- A new NASMA savings account was opened

## **10. Financial Position**

NASMA is a registered charity with income generated through membership fees, training and development events and fundraising. Every effort is made to keep costs to a minimum whilst also maintaining a reserve to fund ongoing activities.

Over the last year NASMA has invested in the update of the NASMA website, materials for NSMW14 and the continued staffing of the office. With the loss of key staff during the year this has included the hiring of temporary staff to ensure the office can continue to function. We have also invested in new office equipment, including the purchase of 2 new computers, a new printer and the cost of having IT specialist overseeing the IT networks and mailboxes within the Office. We have also invested in a new computer system called Huddle. This is used by the Board and Office to share and review documents and improve communication between them.

There were highly talked about problems within the Co-operative group over the last year and the NASMA treasurer investigated the possibility of moving to a different bank. It was concluded that as a registered charity, the Co-operative was the only account available that did not charge for its service. To manage this risk it was therefore decided that NASMA

would continue banking with the co-operative but a new savings account would also be opened with Nationwide. This allows each of NASMA's accounts to remain below the £85,000 limit covered by the government and reduced the risk of NASMA losing money should there be another financial crisis in future.

Compiled by Rob Ellis  
On behalf of the NASMA Board  
November 2014

## **Appendix | A Brief History of NASMA**

*The following information provides a brief history of the organisation.*

Following the Dealing with Debt conference in April 1994, where a need for a national network of student money advisers in HE was discussed, the 1995 Finance to a Degree conference at Keele University was the opportunity for student money advisers to discuss options further. This was when the Association of Student Money Advisers was formed. Later in 1995 the 'Association of Student Money Advisers' added 'National'; becoming 'NASMA'. NASMA then officially launched on 2 July 1996, at the conference AGM, again in Keele.

Back in 1995 it was the Midlands group leading the way as far as regional groups go, closely followed by the North East. London & South East joined the regional groups in February 1996. The other regions then became operational across 1996. The figures within the reports above show the current position regarding regional membership.

Early in 1998 NASMA introduced an electronic mailing/discussion list, hosted on a server at Newcastle University. By the time of the Spring 1998 newsletter the forum had 50 members. By late 1998 the forum was "quite a busy list" with 60-70 messages per month. Amid concerns about the future of the list, 130 members had joined by conference 1999. From January-June 2000 the monthly average number of messages to the mailbase was 75. Moving forward ten years to 2010, the monthly average for January-March 2010 was 248. The website was launched in September 2001, reviewed in 2009, and completely redesigned in July 2011 and again in August 2014.

In March 1998 NASMA employed a part-time administrator for 10hrs per week, to support the vast amount of work needed to organise the annual conference. In June 2004 NASMA advertised for a part time administrator, increasing the hours to 25 per week. The NASMA Board recognise the need to employ additional staff if we are to move on as an organisation. Members of the Board give a lot of hours of their own time to work for NASMA. The Board realise that NASMA could be doing so much more for members, students and the wider sector if we had more resources and were delighted that the Money Advice Service offered to support a one-year Financial Capability position in 2011-12 which led to the creation of the Strategy and Development Manager role. In March 2013 NASMA started an agreement with HELOA to provide office and administrative support to them increasing the number of staff within the office to 3(2.5FTE). As part of the office review in the summer of 2014, a further 0.5FTE role was created to help with the financial aspects of NASMA and the Strategy and Development Manager role was scrapped with the introduction of an office manager and a training manger.

Further strengthening NASMA as a professional membership body, we completed our registration with the Charities Commission and were confirmed as a charity on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2011. This resulted in NASMA Board members becoming charities trustees as well as company directors.

Over the past 18 years NASMA has grown to have over 600 members. Looking back, we have the 2002 Future Directions paper, three years spent moving towards accreditation and training, and in 2009 we drafted our first formal Business Plan.

Throughout the past 18 years we have been involved in consultations with relevant bodies across the sector. NASMA has fed into changes to student support systems, welfare benefits, access funds, and we have taken any and every opportunity to provide feedback at a national level on issues affecting NASMA members and the students our members support. Throughout this time, NASMA has raised issues and ideas both with and about the Student Loans Company and Local Authorities. Amongst others, NASMA has worked closely with the NUS, AMOSSHE, the FSA, Money Advice Service, and more recently we have started to establish links with other relevant sector and advice organisations.

### **Membership**

1995-6 – no data available  
1996-7 – 97  
1997-8 – 167  
1998-9 – 222  
1999-0 – 275  
2000-1 – 265  
2001-2 – 311  
2002-3 – 364  
2003-4 - no data available  
2004-5 – 366  
2005-6 – 442  
2006-7 – 478  
2007-8 – 525  
2008-9 – 577  
2009-0 – 553  
2010-1 – 559  
2011-2 – 619  
2012-3 – 610  
2013-4 – 616

### **Chairs of NASMA**

1995 – 1997: Jude Hawes  
1997 – 1998: Judith Walker  
1998 – 2002: Jayne Aldridge  
2002 – 2006: Keith Houghton  
2006 – 2008: Ian Summers-Noble  
2008 – 2012: Lynne Condell  
2012 – 2014: Phil Davis  
2014 - : Rob Ellis

### **Honorary Life Members**

Alison Ahern  
Jayne Aldridge

Maureen Aspinall  
Lindsey Gadd  
Jude Hawes  
Maggie McHale  
Ian Summers-Noble  
Stef Thomas  
Judith Walker  
Lis Wilkie  
Keith Houghton  
David Bryan  
Elaine Robinson