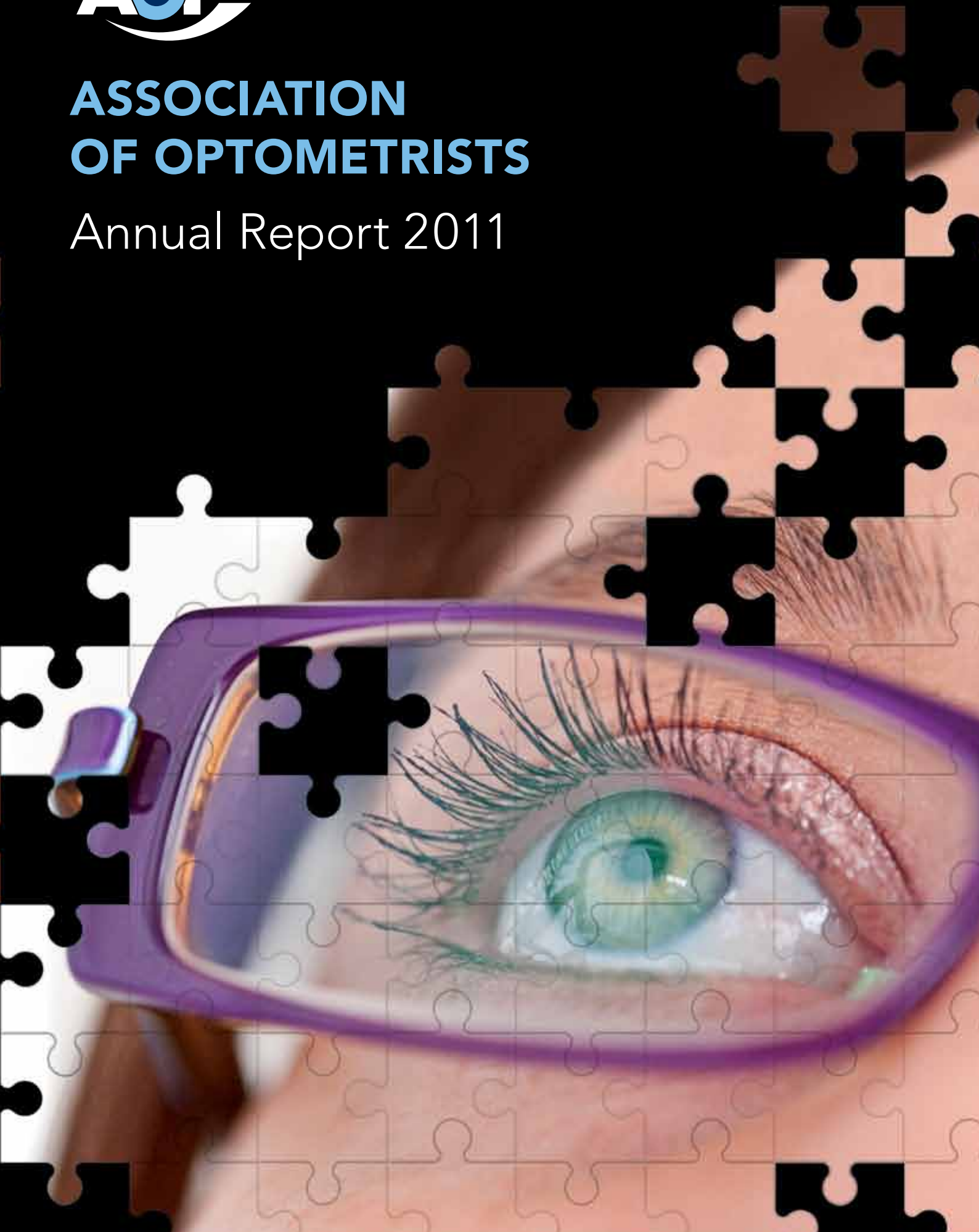




# ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS

Annual Report 2011



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## **Board of Directors**

Dr D M Shannon (Chairman)  
Mrs J Bell  
Mr M E Bickerstaffe  
Mr V G Bush  
Mr M N Charlton  
Mr M R George  
Ms A M McClune  
Ms T Sivapalan  
Mr L R Taylor  
Mr K Thompson  
Mr T J Warburton

## **Company Secretary**

Mr S A King

## **Chief Executive**

Mr R G Hughes

## **Registered office**

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London SE1 0HL

## **Registered number**

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## **Auditors**

Buzzacott LLP  
130 Wood Street  
London EC2V 6DL



# Introduction from the CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Misuse of power by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Health Boards has become an increasing staple of our work, and facing down local officials by letter, telephone, tribunal and in the High Court is now day-to-day business.

Recently, an optometrist asked a well-known optometry blog site where he should go for his indemnity insurance. We were pleased that the responses endorsed the Association of Optometrists (AOP). One went so far as to suggest that "AOP lawyers seem to really enjoy ripping apart anyone who looks sideways at their members." It makes us sound a bit like the mafia, but it does neatly describe the way that individual members are the centre of what the AOP does.

Too many officials are under the delusion that they can interpret the regulations as they please and impose any restrictions on contractors they care to dream up. Presumably in the belief that an individual won't have the ability to argue back. A number of PCT and Health Board employees have learned to their cost that the AOP has expertise, resources and determination.

These activities account for a large majority of your subscriptions and we can repeat our mantra that, whatever the future holds, your welfare and defence as an individual optometrist will remain our primary function and our daily focus.

During 2010, we founded the Optical Confederation alongside the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO), The Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers (ACLM), the Federation of Manufacturing Opticians (FMO) and the Federation of Ophthalmic

and Dispensing Opticians (FODO). Working with other autonomous bodies has its challenges, but it allows us to speak with a stronger and united voice. This is evident in the changes to the NHS in England. As a result of years of lobbying and working alongside the Coalition Parties, the NHS White Paper specifically placed Primary Ophthalmic Services in a national setting, as we had asked. The first time anyone can remember a significant NHS reorganisation specifically identifying the plans for ophthalmic services. Our other joint venture, the LOC Support Unit (LOCSU), which is now in its third year, provides the necessary professionalism and back-up to allow optometry to be taken seriously and to succeed locally in achieving enhanced services arrangements.

In a few weeks time we move into our new headquarters in Clerkenwell, London, near City University. We will own a range of prestigious facilities which will stand as a statement of our confidence in the future of the profession. At the same time it will deliver considerable cost savings for members in the medium term.

We would like to acknowledge the dedicated work of the AOP staff, board and councillors. It is their hard work and enthusiasm that enables us to deliver the services our members need. And – to help us better understand what you want from the AOP – we will continue to survey the membership, and we will engage in a further series of Chairman's meetings and 'Dine with David' events across the UK.

**“Whatever the future holds,  
your welfare and defence  
as an individual optometrist  
will remain our primary  
function and our daily focus”**



**Bob Hughes**  
Chief Executive  
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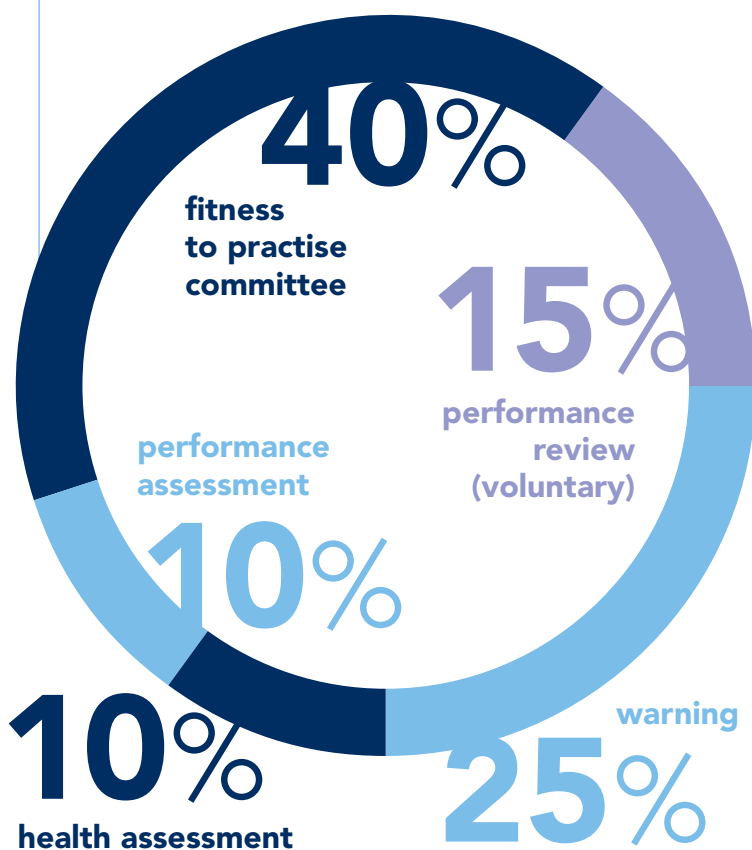
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# LEGAL

The AOP Legal Team assists, advises, protects and promotes members in a wide range of matters.

Of the 20 matters that proceeded from the preliminary stage, the following is a breakdown of decisions made by the GOC's Investigation Committee



The highly specialised team of solicitors, support staff and clinical advisors all work with enthusiasm and energy to represent and defend members who are facing Fitness to Practise cases before the General Optical Council (GOC), investigations by primary care organisations and civil claims (for example clinical negligence). In all of this, the Legal Team has an unrivalled record in defending the reputation of our members.

In 2010, we assisted more than 100 cases which were being investigated by the GOC and almost the same number of civil matters. The evidence of the Legal Team's commitment and expertise can be seen by the fact that of the 100-plus cases in which it assisted, there were only 20 which went from being investigated to additional action being required by the GOC.

In addition the Legal Team dealt with ongoing cases notified to us in previous years. The Legal Team dealt with in total more than 1,000 matters in 2010, taking into account members' general enquires.

During this 12-month period, an ever-increasing workload was dealt with by the Legal Team specifically in response to the interpretation placed by various organisations on the new regulations and changes to the GOS contract. The Legal Team has a number of ongoing matters in relation to the regulations, and currently two cases are due to be heard by the First Tier Tribunal (formerly the FHSAA). Last year we successfully appealed to the First Tier Tribunal in respect of a refusal to list one of our members as a performer. This unreasonable refusal was overturned and the appeal was successful.

In addition to the matters handled in house by the AOP Legal Team in 2010, our external legal advice helpline answered 1,644 legal enquiries from members and Abbey Tax answered a number of tax enquires from members and dealt with 3 tax investigations by HMRC against members.

# EDUCATION

Collaboration with other optical bodies is an essential element of the AOP's work.

## Optical Confederation Education Committee

We are continuing to build relationships with optical bodies across the profession and the Joint Education Committee's focus is on promoting the profession at all levels in the areas of education, standards and workforce needs and requirements.

## Careers

The AOP promotes eye care and optics as a career and we are a key stakeholder in the development of the Careers in Optics campaign. This interactive programme was piloted in schools in the autumn of 2010 to promote eye care careers amongst 14 to 18-year-olds. Alongside the College of Optometrists – and other stakeholders – this scheme will be launched nationally during 2011.

Practitioner support has always been part of the AOP's role in supporting its members. In 2010, more than 20 optometrists were mentored and supported back in to the workplace after a career break.

## Students

The third National Student 'Eye Opener' Conference was a great success in its new venue at Centre Parcs, Longleat. This career-focused event is hugely enjoyed by student delegates and exhibitors alike; it was sold out in 2010, with a 50-strong waiting list. The 2011 event is already planned, with capacity for 275 delegates.

A comprehensive lecture programme ran across all eight optometry universities throughout 2010/11 and the Lecturers' and Students' Forums have also continued to improve student contact, support and communication.

## Events

Building on the success of OTLive in 2009, this event is set to return to Optrafair in 2011. With an additional arena and added student sessions for pre-registration optometrists and also Spectacle Makers Company Technician trainees, places for the popular open arenas are once again in demand.

Working with our American education partners, SECO International, the AOP was once again able to extend the opportunity for UK optometrists to attend SECO2011, the 8,000-delegate optometry CET conference in Atlanta, USA, in March 2011.

Photograph courtesy of the Careers in Optics Working Group

**“The Careers in Optics campaign has been shortlisted as a finalist for 'Best Innovation' at the 2011 Recruiter Awards for Excellence. Nominated for its cutting-edge approach, it is up against competitors including Adidas, Network Rail and Royal Bank of Scotland in a prestigious competition that celebrates the very best recruitment campaigns from across the UK”**

# IN PRACTICE

The AOP continues to provide a high level of support and advice to members to help them deliver excellent patient care and to practise safely within the legal framework that regulates the optical profession.

## Information Governance

An Information Governance audit tool was amongst a range of support aids available on the Quality in Optometry (QiO) website [www.qualityinoptometry.co.uk](http://www.qualityinoptometry.co.uk). These aids were developed by the AOP in conjunction with the other optical bodies and the College of Optometrists to assist GOS contractors in achieving high standards in optometric practice. With this new audit tool, practitioners – via Local Optical Committees (LOCs) and Regional Optical Committees (ROCs) – now have the opportunity to agree with their Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) a sensible information governance arrangement.

Quality in Optometry's Information Governance audit tool meets the needs of PCTs, contractors and patients receiving Primary Ophthalmic Services. The Information Governance levels of the QiO audit are entirely within that required by legislation and GOS contracts and are commensurate with the level of involvement that optometry has with NHS IT.

The Information Governance tool will help contractors to audit their compliance with contractual, legal and regulatory responsibilities, as well as with professional guidance. It is based entirely on elements within the Level 1 (contract compliance) section of QiO.

## NICE and Glaucoma Pathway

During the year, a joint working group established by the College of Optometrists and the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, which included AOP representation, published two documents to assist in the interpretation and application of the NICE guideline on glaucoma. The first document provides guidance on the referral of glaucoma suspects, outlines two groups of patients who could be monitored in community practice rather than referred, and details best practice in referrals based on non contact tonometry. The group also published guidance on supervision in the context of the NICE guideline so that patients, optometrists and ophthalmologists could work together efficiently and safely.

The Association was also represented on the NICE Technology Expert Group drafting quality standards for glaucoma care. The standards will be published later in 2011.

## Independent Prescribing

Sixty-four optometrists have now passed the College's Common Final Assessment for Independent Prescribing. The vast majority of these did the course at either City University or Glasgow Caledonian University. The National Prescribing Centre has also published a *Quick Guide to Commissioning* which can be used by all professionals and commissioners to raise awareness of the advantages of non-medical prescribing in order to achieve better patient care.





# HOSPITAL OPTOMETRY

The Hospital Optometrists Committee (HOC) represents the interests of optometrists who are employees of the National Health Service.

## Hospital Optometric Committee

Once again the NHS has entered a period of uncertainty due to the recent proposal for reform. Having gone through countless reorganisations in recent years, the latest proposals are set against a back drop of £20 billion efficiency savings per year. This is a challenging time and the HOC will continue to offer support to colleagues.

***Hospital optometrists have shown themselves to be a resilient, highly skilled and adaptable group of staff***

The AOP provides membership of UNITE for members employed as hospital optometrists and UNITE continues to support members facing difficulties at a local level. At a national level they will be monitoring closely the implications for the proposal to freeze pay increments in exchange for a 'no compulsory redundancy' agreement for bands 1 to 6.

Hospital optometrists have shown themselves to be a resilient, highly skilled and adaptable group of staff. Despite obvious concerns, we have shown we can seek

new opportunities brought about from such things as changes to doctors' training and also the European Working Time Directive.

We have frequently shown that we are capable and prepared to take on new roles vital to patient care. We are proud of our networks which enable us to share new ideas and protocols with our colleagues around the country and this is facilitated by active regional groups who meet regularly.

The HOC will be represented on several College of Optometrists' committees and will be watching CPD Online (the Continuing Professional Development tool) development with interest.

## 36th Hospital Optometrists Annual Conference

The 36th Hospital Optometrists Annual Conference was held at the Park Inn, Heathrow, and was another well-attended, lively meeting with a comprehensive programme that provided 14 CET points, with lectures and workshops of the highest quality on a wide variety of topics.

Planning for this year's conference is already underway and it will be held at the popular Chesford Grange Hotel, Kenilworth, in November 2011.

# COMMUNICATIONS



The AOP's focus for the Communications Team has, historically, been on talking to an optometric audience: to members and potential members.

Communication to a wider, patient-based audience has always seemed beyond our means; however, over the last year we have started to change that. We have taken small steps to talk to the public, through a number of different channels and our attempts are paying off. We have had significant coverage in national papers (The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph and the Daily Mail); we have had spokesmen on national television (BBC's Rip Off Britain) and radio; and we have had our say in several consumer magazines.

Our ongoing media success is bringing further rewards; the more we are seen, the more people come to us to ask for input. We still don't have the funds to run major campaigns, but we are moving forward on work on children and vision, and on driving vision which will see further progress in the year to come. Our Communications Team is working hard to build relationships with journalists from outside our sector and – thanks to these relationships – you will see eye care raising its profile within the public arena in 2011.

## Digital media

In the last months of 2010 and through 2011, much work has been, and continues to be, done on improving our digital communications. The OT website has been entirely redesigned, and the AOP's own site is currently being completely overhauled. Furthermore, the AOP's membership database has been replaced with a new comprehensive version which will allow us to communicate more easily with members – and in a more targeted way, so that members can be certain that, when they receive an email from the AOP, it will be relevant to them.

The Association continues to explore the use of new media channels, such as Facebook and Twitter. Although these social networking tools are still relatively

little used by members, we are constantly looking at their usage and evaluating their benefits for practitioners. The AOP has a Student Facebook page and Chairman David Shannon is an ardent tweeter. Follow him at @AOPChair or drop into his Facebook page (just search for AOP Chairman).

**“Our ongoing media success is bringing further rewards; the more we are seen, the more people ask us for input”**



Media coverage shown, left to right, from the Daily Mail, The Guardian and The Daily Telegraph



# OPTOMETRY TODAY

January 2011 proved to be a special month in the history of Optometry Today (OT). After months of development, OT's revamped website [www.optometry.co.uk](http://www.optometry.co.uk) was launched on 1 January.

It immediately attracted plaudits for its redesigned clear, new look and the depth of its coverage of the optical sector. The free-access website has numerous new functions which host a wealth of text, video, audio-based and podcast content.

The magazine also celebrated its 50th year since its fortnightly inception as The Ophthalmic Optician in 1961. To mark the occasion the magazine published a series of competitions, features and historical articles. Celebrations of the publication's half-century will continue throughout 2011.

The website leads the way in the UK optical sector's new media coverage. The site's multimedia area consists of up-to-the-minute videos, podcasts, presentations and valuable audio information. A business section has been added to the mix, aimed to further help practitioners succeed in commerce; while a clinical section has also been produced, focusing on articles which are both part of OT's CET coverage as well as items of general clinical interest.

The fortnightly-printed edition of OT has continued to develop in the last year, delivering news, features, free CET and much more. The magazine continues to have a strong circulation of more than 20,000

readers and is editorially-led. With news, regular features and popular CET coverage, OT will continue to report and expand its coverage of new developments in the profession.

Optometry Today continues to have a strong reader circulation of more than

# 20,000

As a brand, the OT name continues to be valuable, and will be widely viewed at Optrafair 2011, especially in the educational forum OTLive.



# EYE HEALTH ALLIANCE

The Eye Health Alliance – a campaigning coalition of optical bodies and eye care charities – seeks to reduce the high level of avoidable sight loss in the UK through increased public awareness of the importance of regular eye tests.

## Joint Public Affairs activity

The AOP's Public Affairs team works jointly with our partners in the Optical Confederation to ensure that the eye care sector speaks with one voice. The General Election in May 2010 provided the focus for much of the team's activity. Working closely with LOCs, a series of practice visits were arranged for many of the parliamentary candidates, several resulting in local press coverage. Following the election, which saw 252 new MPs being elected, the largest intake of new MPs in over 30 years, all MPs were contacted and a further 60 visits across the UK have been arranged. This has been crucial for the sector to develop and build a strong consensus of support amongst parliamentarians.

**“We need to act now to stop more people needlessly going blind due to undetected eye conditions”**

The new coalition Government has since embarked on a high-profile programme of reforms to the NHS and public health. With the replacement of Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities with a new NHS commissioning board and GP commissioning consortia, the eye care sector has to seize the opportunities and secure its place in the new liberated NHS. The Optical Confederation has responded to a number of consultations in response

to the white papers on the NHS and public health. These white papers sparked a number of more detailed consultations on various aspects of the Government's reforms, and the Health and Social Care Bill which puts into place the legislative framework for these reforms, was published in January 2011. Although the proposals to retain the NHS sight testing service as a national service, to be commissioned by the NHS commissioning board, were welcomed, the Public Affairs team will be scrutinising the detail of the Bill as it progresses through Parliament and seeking a number of clarifications over the detail where it affects eye care services.

## Parliamentary reception

The annual Eye Health Alliance Parliamentary reception was hosted by John Baron MP, Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Eye Health. Addressing over 45 MPs and Peers, as well as representatives from the eye care sector, John said: “We need to act now to stop more people needlessly going blind due to undetected eye conditions. Eye health is often overlooked and we must work together to change this. This important public health message must be taken seriously by national and local government, commissioners, and health and social care professionals.”

In an Early Day Motion, tabled following the reception, over 68 MPs signed the motion which called on the Government to ensure reducing avoidable sight loss was included in the Public Health Outcomes Framework, due to be published in summer 2011.

## Party conferences

As members of the Health Hotel, the Eye Health Alliance continues to have a high profile at each of the three main political party conferences. In autumn 2010, the Alliance worked with the Alzheimer's Society and RNID to highlight the need for early diagnosis and treatment for people with long-term conditions, such as sight loss, hearing loss and dementia. AOP Board member Ed Bickerstaffe spoke about his professional experience of the need for early diagnosis of eye conditions, at an event at the Labour Party Conference. Our Head of Public Affairs, Heather Marshall, continues to sit on the Board of the Health Hotel and contributes to the strategic direction of the company.



# WORKING TOGETHER TO RAISE AWARENESS

The AOP works with other optical bodies to talk to the public about eye health and raise the profile of optometry.

## **Driving and eyesight campaign**

The AOP has supported the campaign to improve the system of assessing drivers' vision in the UK. The campaign has called for the replacement of the number plate test with a standardised and scientific assessment of visual acuity, as well as regular screening of drivers' vision when drivers renew their licence. The campaign has been successful in securing the support of a number of transport and road safety organizations, such as Brake, the RAC Foundation, AIRSO and Road Safety GB. The Government is currently consulting on its proposals to make changes to the eyesight requirements for drivers, in order to comply with the new standards contained in the European Directives on Driving Licences.

## **Children's eye health campaign**

The Optical Confederation's Children's Eye Care Initiative continues to advance in its aim to improve eye care for all children. More than 23,000 headteachers received a personal letter from the Confederation highlighting the importance of children's eye health, with a call to action that they should support children having their eyes checked at a young age. Posters were sent to all primary schools, along with online resources to help teachers include eye health in the school curriculum. Throughout the year many optical professionals gave up their time to visit local schools and run sessions for children and teachers on how eyes work and the importance of eye health.

The Children's Eye Care Initiative working group – led by optometrist Polly Dulley – is continuing to work on gathering scientific evidence of the importance of eye care for children, as well as a policy statement on children's eye health. This will include the issue of vision screening and key stage interventions to ensure all children have access to eye care at the time they need it and, as a consequence, are fully able to develop their social and educational potential.

## **Local Optical Committee Support Unit**

The AOP continues to provide a number of services for the Local Optical Committee Support Unit (LOCSU), including the organisation of a successful National

Optometric Conference in November 2010. The AOP's Deputy Chief Executive, Richard Carswell, is currently acting as its Head of Unit to cover for staff illness.

LOCSU's role in advising LOCs in England has become vital in light of the announcement in 2010 of NHS reforms that will see the responsibility for commissioning of the majority of health services move from PCTs to GP commissioning consortia by 2013. The Health and Social Care Bill is intended to empower clinicians to deliver results based on the needs of patients, and LOCSU has a major part to play to ensure that the profession is prepared to work with GP consortia at a local level and exploit the opportunities arising from the reforms. LOCSU is focusing on how the enhanced services fit in with the Department of Health's Quality Innovation, Productivity and Prevention (QIPP) agenda.

The Unit also works on behalf of the Optical Confederation to communicate with LOCs and ROCs, including helping them to deal with the challenges they face as a result of the above changes.



# SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## Directors' statement

The summary financial statement is only a summary of information derived from the full financial statements of the Association of Optometrists for the year ended 31 December 2010 which were approved by the directors at their meeting on 9 March 2011. The summary financial statement does not include information from the directors' report. The auditor has issued an unqualified report on the full annual financial statements and on the consistency of the directors' report with those financial statements. Their report on the full annual financial statements contained no statement under sections 498(2)(a), 498(2)(b) or 498(3) of the Companies Act 2006.

Copies of the full annual financial statements, the auditor's report and the directors' report are available for members to download from the Association's website [www.aop.org.uk](http://www.aop.org.uk) free of charge. Members can elect to receive the full financial statements and reports instead of the Annual Report.

## Independent auditor's statement to the members of the Association of Optometrists

We have examined the summary financial statement of the Association of Optometrists for the year ended 31 December 2010 set out on page 11.

## Respective responsibilities of the directors and the auditor

The directors are responsible for preparing the Annual Report in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summary financial statement within the Annual Report with the full annual financial statements and its compliance with the relevant requirements of section 427 of the Companies Act 2006 and the regulations made thereunder.

We also read the other information contained in the Annual Report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summary financial statement.

This statement, including the opinion, has been prepared for, and only for, the Association's members as a body in accordance with section 427 of the Companies Act 2006 and for no other purpose. We do not, in giving this opinion, accept or assume responsibility for any other purpose or to any other person to whom this statement is shown or into whose hands it may come save where expressly agreed by our prior consent in writing.

We conducted our work in accordance with Bulletin 2008/3 issued by the Auditing Practices Board. Our report on the company's full annual financial statements describes the basis of our opinions on those financial statements.

## Opinion

In our opinion, the summary financial statement is consistent with the full annual financial statements of the Association of Optometrists for the year ended 31 December 2010 and complies with the applicable requirements of section 427 of the Companies Act 2006 and the regulations made thereunder.

We have not considered the effects of any events between the date on which we signed our report on the full annual financial statements (9 March 2011) and the date of this statement.

Buzzacott LLP  
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor  
130 Wood Street  
London EC2V 6DL

6 April 2011



# Summary financial statement for the financial year ended 31st December 2010

<b>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Members' subscription income	5,230,368	5,100,289
Other income	1,404,787	1,368,226
	<u>6,635,155</u>	<u>6,468,515</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Direct professional services	(2,762,935)	(3,137,364)
Operating charges	(3,356,233)	(2,964,571)
<b>OPERATING SURPLUS</b>	<u>515,987</u>	<u>366,580</u>
Profit (loss) on sale of listed investments	81,585	(59,767)
Other investment income	16,663	31,811
Interest payable and other charges	(16,266)	(904)
<b>SURPLUS BEFORE TAXATION</b>	<u>597,969</u>	<u>337,720</u>
Provision for losses in Joint Venture	(31,398)	–
Taxation credit	512	13,082
<b>Surplus for the financial year</b>	<u><b>567,083</b></u>	<u><b>350,802</b></u>
 <b>BALANCE SHEET</b>	 <b>2010</b>	 <b>2009</b>
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Tangible assets	3,782,672	3,322,176
Investments	338,250	704,146
	<u>4,120,922</u>	<u>4,026,322</u>
Current assets	1,461,381	2,421,558
Current liabilities	(1,814,593)	(4,310,667)
	<u>3,767,710</u>	<u>2,137,213</u>
Creditors falling due after more than 1 year	(1,147,115)	–
Provisions	(286,080)	(369,781)
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<u><b>2,334,515</b></u>	<u><b>1,767,432</b></u>
<b>RESERVES</b>	<u><b>2,334,515</b></u>	<u><b>1,767,432</b></u>



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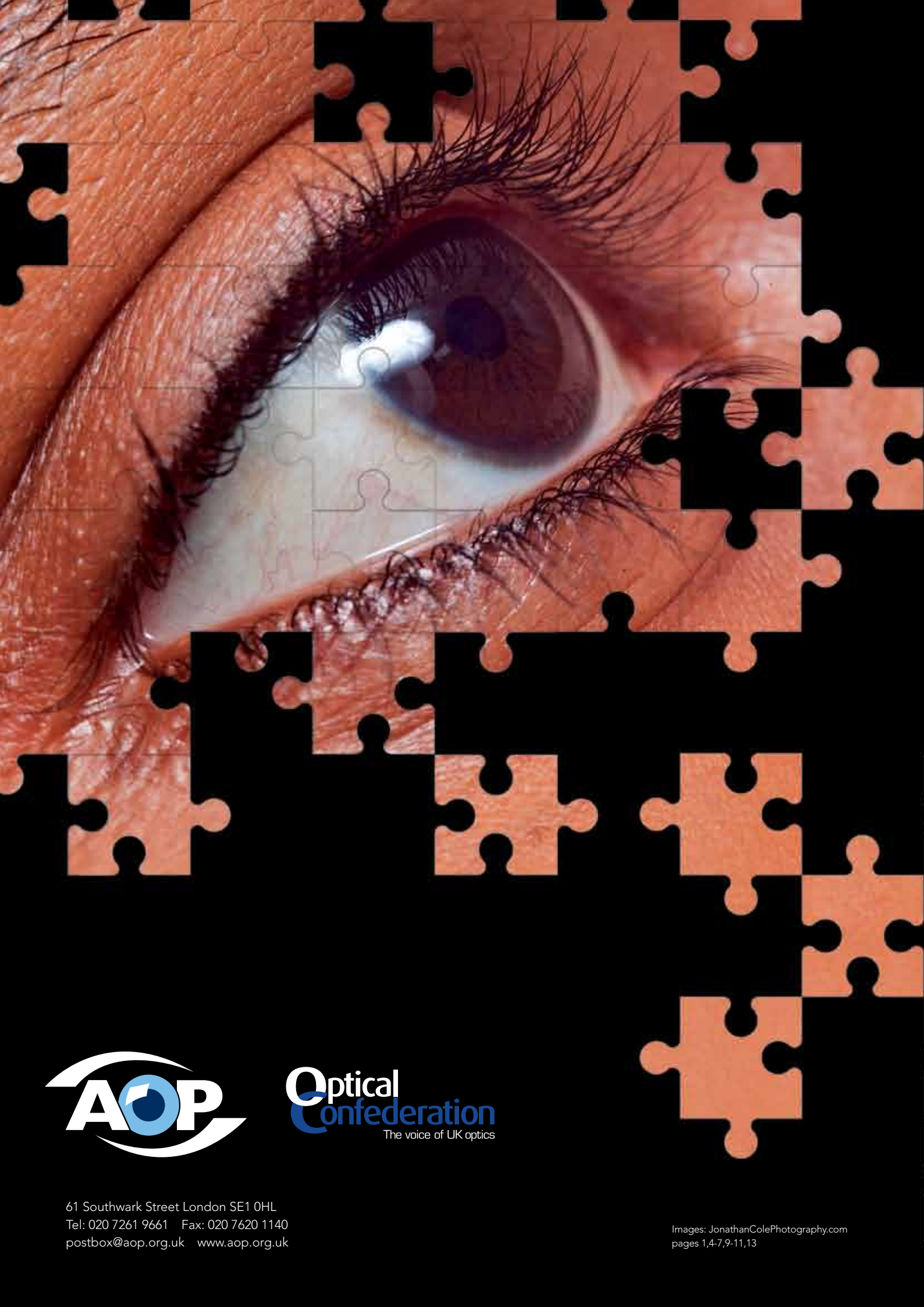
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