

# **SIGNPOST**

**Newsletter of the Peak and Northern  
Footpaths Society**



**Ladybower viaduct across the reservoir**

**Number 34**

**Autumn 2009**

## **RAMBLINGS FROM THE CHAIR**

The great strength of our society comes from the commitment of you, our members. I believe that your commitment comes from your belief in the work we do. I also believe that every member would like to know about the decisions we make in order to carry out that work. So I am devoting my ramblings, this time, to a detailed report on the Half Year Meeting.

After opening the meeting I handed over to David Bratt, the President, who paid tribute to Harry Sutcliffe (former inspector for Salford) and Michael Dearden (former agent for NW Lancashire), both of whom passed away since the last newsletter. The society was represented at both funerals and the meeting observed a one-minute silence to show our appreciation and respect for the work and commitment they had given to the society.

Next I reported on the health of the Society. Volunteer numbers remain steady with very low turnover. Membership continues to rise and has reached an all-time high of 1,468. We now have 298 signposts showing the way to all walkers and bringing in new members via the "join us" plaques. With four Courts and Inquiry Officers we are able to attend more Public Inquiries than we could with only one officer. (John Harker is to be congratulated on his recent successes described elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Whilst it was easy to report on the health of the society, the task of reporting on our finances and what the future holds would have been an onerous one were it not for the full support of the entire management team. Our current deficit for the year stands at £22,000. This includes an exceptional spend of £6,000 as a loan to Hunshelf Parish Council for the purchase of the open space known as "the Isle of Skye", so the true deficit for 2009 amounts to some £16,000. Whilst our reserves are healthy it is clear we cannot continue to overspend at this level.

What follows is a summary of our current situation and the recommendations to ensure the society remains healthy. I started the presentation with a reminder of decisions that had been taken by the membership at previous AGMs:

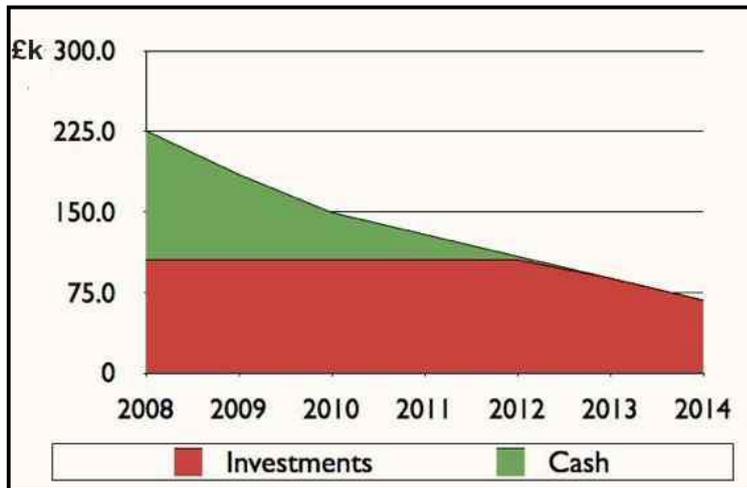
The 2007 AGM agreed that we must close the gap between income and expenditure.

The 2008 AGM agreed that the basic subscription should be raised to £10.

Since 2007 we have taken a number of measures to reduce expenditure and the raised subscription rates have increased income. However, as the first graph shows, we will deplete our cash reserves and start to cut into our long-term investments unless we take further action.

It is important to note that our long-term investments bring in vital income in the form of interest and dividends. We have maximised this income on the recommendations of Charles Stanley Stockbrokers.

Apart from our investments we are reliant on subscriptions and donations for income. Both can be enhanced by "gift aid", which can increase income by 20%. Approximately half of the membership have already completed a



gift aid form. If you have not done so or are unsure, please complete the form, which can be found on page 11 of this newsletter or downloaded from our web site. After much discussion the trustees with the full support of the officers agreed to recommend a set of cuts in spending. In presenting those recommendations I stressed

that they are flexible and all decisions can be reversed if our income increases. I also stressed that the cuts are aimed at ensuring that the society can continue to deliver its core activities unchecked. There is a report on what constitutes core activity on page 9.

The recommended cuts apply to four areas of activity. Each recommendation was presented to the meeting and discussed. I then asked for an indicative vote to judge the members' support..

### **Publications**

These represent a considerable cost to the society in terms of printing and postage costs. The recommendation to reduce the number of newsletters to three a year, saving over £1,000, was supported by the members present. It was also agreed to pare down the Annual Report. The overall quality will be maintained but by reducing the number of full colour pages, no longer listing all members, etc. we can make a significant saving. We are also currently testing ways of delivering publications electronically. This is not as easy as it sounds, with email lists to maintain, virus protection to be considered, etc.

### **Meetings**

It had been our original intention to recommend substantial cuts in the budget for refreshments at both meetings. However, the appeal for donations towards the cost of the meeting met with an overwhelming response, which all but covered the cost of the meeting. As a result we will continue with the current format and make similar appeals in the future, reviewing the budget after each meeting.

### **Signposts**

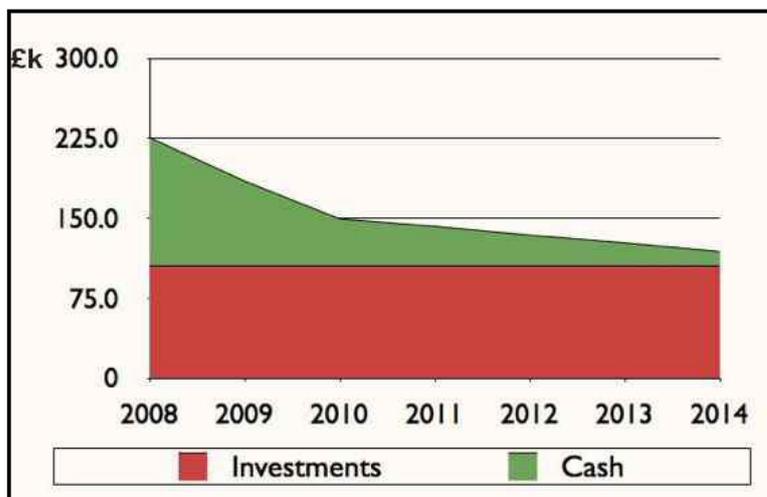
During the past 18 months, in the hope of increasing membership, the Society has installed signposts in those areas where we have few members. Reluctantly we must scale back on this activity, though maintaining our current signposts remains a priority. A budget of £1,000 for maintenance was approved by the membership. All other signpost work for the coming year will only be funded by direct donation. The current recommended donation of £200 per signpost will be reviewed to ensure that our costs are fully covered. Many of our signs are dedicated *in memoriam* but we also

receive donations from people wishing to celebrate a significant event such as an anniversary or a birthday. Please contact Dave Morton if you would like to dedicated a signpost to such an event.

## Bridges

As with signposts, the Society has spent considerable sums of money on bridges from its own funds. We remain committed to completing all the currently approved bridges and have some funds available from the Ward legacy which can be spent on these. The membership supported the recommendation that future bridges should be only be funded by direct donation. Do contact us if you would like to donate a bridge.

The next figure depicts our financial position over the next 5 years if the agreed recommendations are implemented. There will be a significant reduction in cash reserves but our investments will be maintained at their current levels.



The meeting continued with the presentation on “Core Activity” by Terry Norris. Again I must stress that none of this work will be affected by the proposed cuts.

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After lunch I outlined a plan to review our membership income. I started by quoting from the 1922 Annual Report (available on our website)

*It has been brought to the notice of Council that it is not sufficiently known that the terms of membership are simple. There are no formalities other than the payment of a subscription of not less than 2s 6d per annum. which entitles a member to a copy of the Annual Report and to any information it may be in the Council's power to give.*

*In fixing so small a minimum subscription, the Society had in view the desirability of obtaining the highest possible amount of public interest, but, of course, the revenue to be expected from subscriptions at this low rate would be quite inadequate to the requirements for the conduct of the Society's operations. The Council, therefore, renews its appeal for subscriptions higher than the minimum.*

Every word of that statement is as apposite today as it was 87 years ago. The subscription in 1922 was 2s 6d (12½ pence) which, in terms of average earnings, equates to £22.50 today. Our current subscription of £10 was set to ensure that membership is affordable to all members of the walking public, just as it was in 1922. Another point to note about the 1922 subscription is the stress on it being a minimum rate and the request for additional donations.

The new membership proposals, which we hope to have ready well before the AGM, will embody the same principles. We plan to retain the low basic rate of £10 with a strong emphasis that this is only the minimum rate. In the discussion that followed there were strong feelings that we must immediately make every effort to increase donations.

Earlier in this report I stated that the underlying deficit for 2009 is about £16,000 and that the cuts that have been approved will save approximately £8,000 in the coming year. That leaves us with an ongoing year-on-year deficit of £8,000.

With those figures in mind I would ask you all to think about the value you place on the work we do, and consider making regular small donations by standing order. Details of how to do so can found on page 8 of this newsletter

## **OBITUARIES**

### **Michael Dearden**

Mike, our Agent for NW Lancashire died in October. Mike worked hard and long for the Society and we were represented at his funeral by Shirley Northcott fellow Agent for NE Lancashire. Mike was instrumental of late in pursuing a claim for a footpath creation in Silverdale and this we will take forward as a testimony to his good works.

### **Dr Harry Sutcliffe, Emeritus Professor University of Salford**

Harry died on 12th August after a brief illness and the Society was represented at his funeral by the President. Harry was for 20 years our inspector for the City of Salford, a job which he tackled with great enthusiasm.

But his work for us was but one example of his devotion to public duties. During WWII he worked on the development of radar, a task which took him to the Far East at a time when the threat from Japanese air raids was very real.

After the war he rose to the position of Professor of Electrical Engineering at the University of Salford where, on top of his normal duties, he offered friendship and support especially to overseas students.

A keen climber and fell walker, and a long-time member of the Midland Association of Mountaineers, he introduced many young people to the great outdoors as well as climbing extensively in the great European ranges and his beloved Lake District

He was a founder member of the University of the Third Age in Salford. He was also a voluntary tree warden for the city and a Civic Trust member, working to enhance and defend the environment

He is survived by Betty, his wife for 41 years, a son, a daughter and a stepdaughter.

## **PNFS WALKS PROGRAMME**

For all walks, check train or bus times near the date and bring lunch. All walkers joining a PNFS led walk should be appropriately dressed and are responsible for their own safety. Walk leaders reserve the right to exclude people from the walk without giving any reason for that decision.

### **CHRISTMAS WALK - Wednesday 16th December**

The December long and short walks are being combined into a single walk led by the Chairman Clarke Rogerson (0161 749 8412).

Flixton Bottoms Path - a repeat of the popular linear walk which explores the roots and history of the Society.

9 miles but can finish by Metro at 5 miles or 6 miles. Very flat.

Manchester Oxford Road 1016. Walk starts Flixton station 1030.

### **SHORT WALKS**

#### **Wednesday 13th January**

Leader: Brian Summerscales (0161 437 8500)

Macclesfield Circular. 7 miles. 900ft ascent

Manchester Piccadilly. 0948. Walk starts Macclesfield Station 1020

#### **Wednesday 10th February**

Leader: Dave Brown (01663 733236)

Mossley to Greenfield via Hartshead Pike. 6 miles . 1100ft ascent.

Manchester Piccadilly 1011 changing at Stalybridge.

Manchester Victoria 1027.

#### **Wednesday. 10th March**

Leader : Dave Morton ( 0161 283 7824)

Whaley Bridge, Goyt Valley, Taxal circular. 5.6 miles, 950ft.ascent

Manchester Piccadilly 0952 or 199 bus from Stockport 0935.

Walk starts at Whaley Bridge station at 1031.

### **LONGER WALKS**

#### **Wednesday 25th November**

Leader: David Stearne (01928 735809)

Littleborough circular.via Blackstone Edge. 9.miles. 1,300 ft ascent.

Manchester Victoria 0922. Walk starts Littleborough station at 0945.

**Note the change of time and venue**

#### **Wednesday 28th January**

Leader: Jeff Lewis (0161 766 4683)

Wilmslow to Nether Alderley linear. 10 miles undulating

Manchester Piccadilly 0938. Walk starts at Wilmslow station at 1005.

Return by bus to Alderley Edge or Wilmslow.

#### **Wednesday 25th February**

Leader: Martin Riley (01706 848408)

Greenfield circular including Saddleworth 55 to assert once again the public's right to walk this path. 11 miles .Hilly

Manchester Piccadilly 1011 changing at Stalybridge.

Manchester Victoria 1027. Walk starts at Greenfield station at 1055

## Wednesday 25th March

Leader: Bill Minshall (07771 985846)

Kidsgrove circular. 10 miles undulating.

Manchester Piccadilly 0948. Walk starts at Kidsgrove station 1035.

## HINTS TO LEADERS

*From the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers Handbook (1932)*

The Ramble will be taken, wet or fine, and the Leader must follow the printed route. He will wear a distinctive red badge, and appoint a whipper-in.

He has full charge of the arrangements for the day and is expected to write in advance and make some provision for tea – but he cannot be responsible for a large party, and, therefore, members themselves should write beforehand.

He is expected to provide a reading, or to give useful information upon the way (place names, etc) from Ramblers' booklets or other sources, and to see that some song is sung during the day.

He must see that new members do not leave waste paper or orange peel to defile either field or moorland.

## SIGNPOST REPORT

Only three new signposts have been erected in the four months from July to October. All of them were paid for by generous donations. In August, S372 was erected at Back Tor on the Mam Tor ridge as a memorial to John Beard of the Staffordshire Long Distance Walkers Association; and S373 at Dunge Valley Gardens in the Toddbrook valley commemorates the 67th anniversary of Buxton Rambling Club. None was erected in September, but in October S342 was erected in rocky terrain above Rivelin Dams in Sheffield to honour the footpath work done by Bob McHale. Bob's partner, Judy Gathercole, was the kind donor. I must also thank the Abbotsfield Rambling Club of Flixton, who adopted S357 at the junction of the Pennine Way and Standedge Trail.



Abbotsfield Fellwalkers of Flixton celebrate their first PNFS signpost on the Marsden Estate (NT)

In September I helped Martyn Sharp, the Peak District National Park's Pennine Way ranger, to replant the 1939 cast-iron S085 at the top of Jacob's Ladder, after an absence of several years. Martyn himself found, painted, transported and planted it, so all I had to do was post it.

Maintenance has been carried out by Philip Jones, Brian Morrison, Ted Wolfe

and myself; John Hodgson, our contractor, did the hard digging with Ted's help. Farmer John Shirt of Lady Booth Hall Farm, Edale, helped John and Ted to get S372 up the hill to Back Tor on his quad-bike.

Five more signposts are in the pipeline. S375 and S376 will soon be erected in Saddleworth, close to Besom Hill Reservoir and a site by the River Tame between Delph and Denshaw. Martin Riley and Bernard Taylor have given invaluable help in locating these signs in an area where PNFS signposts are sparse. S376 will become a memorial to our former inspector Harry Sutcliffe thanks to the generosity of his family. S377 will be located at Knotlow Farm, Flagg, in memory of Brian Hamilton Senior, thanks to a donation from Brian Hamilton Junior and his brother. S378 will be a mile northeast, at the suggestion of Ian Ray. Again this is an area where PNFS signposts are few. Finally, S379 will soon be located at Lower Nabbs Farm, Wildboardclough, as a memorial to Bob Chaney of Manchester R.A.

On the restoration front, S112 which indicated an "accommodation path to Edale Moor" via Grindslow House grounds, may go to the Moorland Centre of the PNP at Edale for display. S226, commemorating Colin Fenton, will soon be restored to the canal bank at the start of Lyme Handley 3 as progress is made towards reopening that footpath.

The trustees have decided that henceforth and for the foreseeable future all signposts will be financed only out of donations, so, if you like our signposts, please consider the possibility of a donation (currently £200) for one to commemorate a special birthday, wedding anniversary, birth or passing. They make an exceptionally long-lasting present or memorial and are of practical value to walkers. Phone me on 0161 283 7824 or drop me a line at Taylor House, if you wish to do so.

Rowland Mower, son of Thomas, our first footpaths inspector, produced our nicest cast-iron plates from 1906 to 1915, but then disappeared abruptly from the PNFS records in 1921. However, it seems that he continued to live at 278, Albert Terrace, Buxton Rd, Newtown, Disley until his death in the late 1950s. I believe that he had a daughter. Finally, Shane Bates of the National Trust at Hayfield assures me that the restoration of the NT plaque on South Head, commemorating Frank Head, is imminent.

*Dave Morton*

### **MAKING DONATIONS TO THE SOCIETY**

If you wish to donate to the Society, either one-off or on a regular basis you can do so by standing order to our bank account using the following details:

SORT CODE: 40-52-40      ACCOUNT NUMBER: 00089378

And, of course, you can still send a donation by cheque to Taylor House.

If you are a UK tax payer please consider gift-aiding your donation using the form on page 11. This will increase your donation by at least 20%

## **THE CORE ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY**

In taking steps to address the financial situation whereby the Society's expenditure is exceeding its income the fundamental objective is to protect our core activities as set out in our constitution. The purpose of this short article is to set out what those activities are. Firstly, monitoring proposals to divert or extinguish public rights of way and objecting where these proposals are against the interests of walkers. Secondly, inspecting footpaths and reporting faults to the appropriate Highway Authority. This is with a view to getting obstructions removed and paths put back into a good state of repair. Thirdly, assisting with claims to add new paths to the Definitive Map on the basis of user and historical evidence. Fourthly, maintaining our existing signposts in good order.

These tasks are likely to become more difficult because of reductions in funding of local authorities. This will mean posts left unfilled, redundancies and cuts in maintenance budgets. Rights of way protection is unlikely to be seen as a priority area.

Our response must include using legal procedures and remedies where persuasion has failed to ensure a satisfactory outcome. This means opposing unacceptable diversions and closures at public inquiries and serving notices under section 130A of the Highways Act 1980 to force Councils to comply with their duty to ensure the right of the public to use public footpaths and bridleways without hindrance. This should cause the Council to serve a notice on the offending landowner to remove the obstruction with the sanction that if they do not comply the Council will remove the obstruction and send the bill to the landowner. Applied with due vigour this can be a cost-effective and efficient remedy to restore a path to public use. Using section 56 of the Highways Act 1980 which allows any person, including the Society, to go to the Magistrates' Court to ask for an order that a public path, out of repair, e.g. because it is badly overgrown or subject to serious flooding, be put back into repair.

Councils are likely to fight harder in future, as they often do not share our view of the importance of our heritage of public footpaths and bridleways. We need to be well resourced, including being prepared to support our volunteers with professional assistance where the case is important and justified by the benefits to walkers of a successful outcome. This is the case in the claim for the path in Cheshire from the Bridestones to the Cloud.

*Terry Norris*, (Trustee.)

## **CORRECTIONS**

In the last edition of Signpost I reported on our very successful attendance at the Marple Locks Festival, saying that it was organised by the Marple Civic Society. In fact it was organised by the Marple Locks Heritage Society. My apologies to both organisations

The cover photograph on that issue was of members of the Society on a walk with St Michael's church, Mottram-in-Longdendale in the background

## **A TALE OF THREE PUBLIC INQUIRIES OR “IT WAS A GAME OF THREE HALVES, BRIAN”.**

Part of a Courts and Inquiries Officer’s “job description” is to represent the Society at a public inquiry should a case that we are involved in ever get that far. Rhoda Barnett and I have been involved in three such inquiries in the space of three months recently. In football terms, the score is 2-1 to the Society, not a bad return on the Society’s investment in time, effort and funds.

The first inquiry took place over three days in late June at the offices of Tameside MBC in Ashton under Lyne. The Public Path Diversion Order sought to divert public footpaths 76 and 77 (Longdendale) near Broadbottom. The underlying reason behind the diversions was the desire of Tameside to avoid having to put into repair a bridge across the river Etherow which carried footpath 77. Tameside Magistrates’ Court had given them two years to do the work, and that time was nearly up. We were joined at the inquiry by the Open Spaces Society, our affiliate the Longdendale & Glossopdale Footpaths Preservation Society (L&GFPS), as well as a number of local residents.

Although the Order was ostensibly made in the interests of the two landowners involved, neither of them came to give evidence to that effect. We argued that Tameside had not shown that it was in the landowners’ interests, and that the proposed new routes were far less convenient or enjoyable compared to the existing paths. Our local inspector, Pat Thomas, and David Frith for the L&GFPS gave good evidence of the loss to walkers from the proposed routes, as did several local residents. In his decision letter, the inspector said that the Council’s evidence on the landowners’ interests was not clear-cut but he felt there was benefit to them in the diversions. He accepted our arguments on the loss of convenience and enjoyment of the existing paths but felt these drawbacks were not of sufficient importance to outweigh the benefits of the diversions to the landowners and crucially to the public purse of not having to repair the bridge. This saved Tameside taxpayers’ in excess of £100,000. He confirmed the Order to divert the paths. 1-0 down.

In early September, we went to Glossop Town Hall along with the RA and some local residents to oppose the diversion of part of Glossop Footpath 17 being sought by High Peak Borough Council (HPBC). The path ran across a play area on an estate built over the last few years. Play equipment obstructed the path. HPBC as the landowner wanted to divert the path along estate road footways to reduce the incidents of anti-social behaviour allegedly suffered by local residents. Evidence was heard from two police officers, local councillors and local residents who supported the diversion. Crucially the case hinged on whether the footway of Shirebrook Drive was already public or not. HPBC argued that the footway had not yet been adopted; therefore they could divert a path onto it. Rhoda argued that the footway had become public through heavy usage since its construction by the developer and that, if this was the case, legal precedent precluded a diversion of one highway onto another highway. Such a thing would be an extinguishment, not a diversion. The inspector’s decision letter focused exclusively on this issue of the current status of Shirebrook Drive’s footway. He concluded that it had been dedicated as public by the developer and used by the public. It followed therefore that HPBC could not use legislation designed for the diversion of footpaths, as in

effect what they were proposing was indeed an extinguishment. He refused to confirm the Order. An equaliser and now its 1-1.

In late September, we went to Auckley Village Hall near Doncaster to seek confirmation of a Modification Order to add a footpath to the Definitive Map. Doncaster MBC had decided to take a neutral stance, leaving it to the claimant for the path, the Parish Council, to make its own case. I had offered the Society's support to the Parish Council and presented the case for them at the inquiry. The objectors, who had blocked off a well-used footpath passing between their houses onto a recreation ground, were represented by a barrister. I called over a dozen witnesses who attested to their use of the path for many years, in some cases over 20 years, without let or hindrance. The objectors said that a fence blocked the path from the late 70s until the mid 80s and this precluded use "as of right" during the statutory 20-year period required by section 31 of the Highways Act 1980. However, the vital evidence was from a previous owner of one of the houses, whom we had traced even though she had moved away from Auckley. She had lived there from 1989 to 2002 and had accepted the path as public, often passing the time of day with users of the path. The inspector, in his decision letter, attached great weight to this as well as some documentary evidence I had of a section of the path having been adopted as public by the former South Yorkshire County Council in 1979. He confirmed the Order and a very happy Parish Council has voted to make a donation to the Society for its help and support. 2-1 to us.

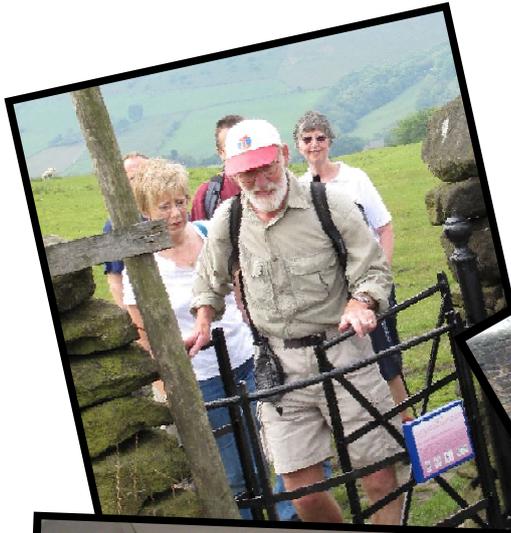
There are nearly always inquiries in the pipeline. There is the 'Cloud' claim case in Cheshire; another Modification Order in Doncaster where I'm representing the claimant. It is part of what this Society is, and should be, all about. It means a lot of work for the Courts and Inquiries team, but the right result makes all that effort worthwhile and very fulfilling.

*John Harker*



<b>Gift Aid Form</b>	Name _____ Address _____ _____ _____ _____ Postcode _____	Please treat all subscriptions, gifts and donations that I make to the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society as Gift Aid donations. I understand that I must be a taxpayer, paying an amount of tax equal to the tax to be claimed.	Signature _____ Date _____	Please remember to notify us if you no longer pay tax equal to the amount of tax we reclaim or if you wish to cancel this advice.
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