

# **The Royal Institution of Naval Architects**

## **The President's address to the 2020 AGM**

May I welcome you to the 2020 Annual General Meeting being held for the first time as a fully online meeting, and at a most challenging and testing time for members, the Institution and global maritime industry. As is customary in my report to you, I will reflect on the Institution's achievements over the past year, and will look forward, as best I can, to what changes and activities members can expect over the next twelve months and beyond.

Membership remained steady during the year with membership in over 90 countries continuing to reflect the internationalism of the Institution. There was a small increase in Corporate members matched by a reduction in Student Members. Encouraging and particularly retaining membership is challenging at a time when the industry is itself facing challenges and lower levels of activity. The Council and Board continue to give priority to encouraging the younger members of the profession to be involved with the Institution as Associate Members and Student Members. The Chief Executive maintains links with the 70+ universities and colleges where the Institution has members.

However, the Institution cannot and should not be complacent about attracting new members and retaining existing members. It cannot take it for granted that those individuals who are today involved in the design, construction or maintenance of marine vessels and structures will become members of the Institution. The Institution must constantly demonstrate the value of membership. It must show that membership provides both an international recognition of the achievement of, or intention to achieve, the highest standards of professional competence, and will be of benefit to members' professional development at all stages in their career. Increasingly, the Institution must also demonstrate to employers the value of their engineers' membership of the Institution to their company. .

For many members, one of the greatest benefits of membership is the opportunity to meet other maritime professionals at local Branch or Section meetings. The Institution's Branches and Sections have had full programmes of technical meetings and other activities during the year, and I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Institution, to thank those members who give willingly and freely of their time to serve on the Division Councils, and Branch and Section Committees. Without the time which they willingly give, such activities would not take place. It is due in no small part to their efforts that the Institution enjoys its international standing. It is pleasing to report the formation this year of the Institution's newest Branch in the North West of England. We wish every success to the Branch which has held its first meeting, also online.

One of the Objectives of the Institution is to make its collective expertise available for the benefit of the profession and society. That Objective is achieved principally through the work of the Institution's Technical Committees – the IMO Committee, the Maritime Safety Committee, the Maritime Environment Committee and the Maritime Innovation Committees. It is appropriate to describe these Committees, together with the Membership and Professional Affairs Committees as the powerhouse of the Institution.

But of course many members also make their contribution in other ways, for example by refereeing papers for conferences and publications, or acting as Professional Review Interviewers for those members seeking registration. That contribution may also come from promoting the Institution and encouraging membership wherever they are, something I would commend to you all. These are all opportunities for members to put something back into their Institution and their profession – nothing is more valued and appreciated than members’ time and enthusiasm.

As it was in 1860, “promoting and facilitating the exchange of technical and scientific information ... thereby to improve the design of ships” has continued to be the aim of the Institution over the past twelve months – an aim which it has successfully achieved through its publications and its conferences.

All the Institution’s journals have continued to enjoy their well-deserved reputations as the leading technical journals in their fields, appreciated for the quality and scope of their content in the 100 and more countries in which they are distributed. The regular eNewsletters, introduced last year to complement the full journals, continue to provide further up-to-date news, views and information on what is happening in all sectors of the industry. The Institution continues to make full use of digital media through its social media sites – LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, together with its You Tube Channel where it has started publishing selected presentations from its conferences.

The Institution has maintained its reputation for the quality of its international conferences. In the past twelve months, the Institution has organised or co-organised 15 events in 6 countries, covering a wide scope of technical content. The Institution is grateful for the efforts of both the Institution’s conference staff and those members who referee the papers and chair the conference sessions. It is also grateful to those who contribute the papers themselves, as it is these that ensure that the conferences are relevant to the challenges facing our industry today.

The Institution has continued to encourage high academic and professional standards by recognising the achievement of both those young - and not so young - members of the profession and industry. It was a great pleasure to announce the award of the Institution’s medals and prizes a few moments ago.

The Institution’s links and standing with industry were maintained through its Corporate Partner members, of which four new companies in Singapore, the USA, Turkey and the UK were welcomed during the year, by the sponsorship of awards and activities by industry, and the many visits to companies made by the Chief Executive.

I hope you will agree that this report on the Institution’s activities over the past twelve months is an encouraging and positive one, particularly when viewed against the backdrop of the difficulties which the maritime industry has experienced during the year, and from which the Institution cannot be immune.

I said at the beginning of my report that I would also look to the future, over the next twelve months. Had I been making this report at the beginning of the year, I would have told you that it was expected to be more of the same with regard to its membership and activities, with the Institution as

always seeking to respond to the changing needs and priorities of its members, the profession and the maritime industry. I would have forecast another challenging year for the maritime industry and the Institution. But of course the situation which members, the industry and the world is responding to, both today and for the foreseeable future, presents a different dimension of challenge.

As you will be aware, in response to the UK Government's restrictions, Headquarters have been closed and all staff are working from home. As the Treasurer has reported earlier, the main effect of that action has been the postponement of events, with the impact on the Institution's finances. The Board will continue to assess and review that impact for the remainder of this year, and the inevitable effect on activities next year. However, as far as conditions will allow, every effort is being made to carry on the Institution's other activities. The Membership Committee continues to consider applications for election and transfer of membership, with Professional Review Interviews being carried out with all participants being remote from each other. The other Committees are meeting remotely and continuing work between meetings. All publication deadlines are being met, although the delivery of printed magazines to some countries is being delayed. It is intended to trial fully online conferences, presenting papers which would have been presented at postponed conferences.

I would conclude my Report, still looking ahead, with reference to the Strategic Review of the Institution which the Board has been conducting and which will conclude this year. The Board will be issuing a report on the actions taken or yet to be taken as a result of the Review, but one of the more far reaching of those actions has been demonstrated today by the elections to Council. As the Chief Executive has reported, these were the first elections to be held since the introduction of Regions, and the allocation of places on Council in proportion to the number of members in each Region. This internationalisation of the Council is intended to further reflect the internationalism of the Institution, which in due course will also be reflected in the Board and Committees. Regional Vice Presidents will represent the Institution and the views of members in their Regions. It is hoped that this major change to the structure of the Institution will lead to greater engagement and sense of ownership by members in all 92 countries.

It would be something of an understatement to conclude by stating that the future, not just for the Institution, but for the industry and world is uncertain. That uncertainty is one of the major challenges which the Institution faces over the coming months, but as you would expect, I am sure that it will rise to the challenge.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your attention. That concludes my Report, and the floor is yours. If you wish to speak, please use the raised hand function on the Participant's Panel on the Zoom Taskbar, when your microphone will be unmuted. Please introduce yourself.