

2022 Annual Report of Congress

This report covers Congress activities between the Institution's AGMs in June 2021 and June 2022.

Congress has held four sessions during this period and discussions continued as normal on 'Yammer', supported by occasional 'Go-To' webinars where more direct communication and the opportunity to ask questions gave additional value. The inclusivity of the on-line format again proved its worth.

The range of discussions has been diverse. Some topics were proposed by the Board of Trustees, some by Congress members following suggestions from the wider Institution membership. These included such diverse subjects as 'Influence – has the IChemE got any?', 'Conduct Unbecoming – how to deal with disruptive behaviour outside the remit of the Code of Conduct', 'Engineering Ethics' and analysing the Former Members Survey. A topic which generated significant discussion was the impact of the New Membership Application Process and has encouraged ongoing work to streamline and improve systems in this area. We encourage all members to engage with us via email, either to the general Congress address, or through individual contact. Congress continues its efforts to increase member interaction.

Congress has robustly represented members' views, proposing practical suggestions for action and improvement. I am pleased to report that the Trustees have been receptive to the ideas and comments put forward. The value of having 'real world' feedback from members, for instance in the operation of the new membership process, has been invaluable in determining ways to improve the member experience.

We have just held our fourth elections, and I am pleased to welcome the nine new Congress members, bringing our total membership to 28 (down from 34) out of 40 available seats. The first intake of Congress members has reached the end of their three-year term, and several have opted to stand again for a second. The interest in joining Congress from members in the early stages of their careers is particularly heartening. We look forward to a Face-to-Face meeting in 2023, when remaining travel restrictions are finally removed.

An important part of Congress's role is to assess and report on the Institution's business strategy and accounts. We commend the work of the Trustees and the Management in controlling and developing a viable business strategy to take the institution through the next years. Congress has had input to the business strategy, and we look forward to having input to the successor to 'Strategy 2024' over the coming year.

Congress could not function without the wholehearted backing of the staff at Rugby. I am pleased to report that there has been a new focus on supporting members, and I thank the staff for their patience and dedication in coming to terms with remote working, in particular our Congress Officer, Eileen Gambrell.

Finally, as I step down as inaugural Chair of Congress, I can honestly say it has been a privilege to serve the IChemE in this way, and I would encourage all members to 'get involved' to ensure that the 'Voice of the Membership' is heard in a balanced and professional manner.

Nigel Hirst
 Congress Chair