

Update for the membership from the Chief Executive

I chose to join IChemE from the Engineering Council at the end of January 2017 because the Institution had a strong reputation for global outreach and the highest reputation for maintaining its entry standards. I wanted to be a part of this vibrant community of chemical engineers and to help the membership share their successes with a wider audience.

On my first day, I found an Institution with lots of energy; energy that was being expended on a broad and complex spectrum of activity. I met some incredibly dedicated volunteers and learnt that our technical panels foster some of the best-regarded publications, including journals and forms of contract, within our peer group. I was also impressed by the extent of our international programme of training and events, particularly the *Hazards* series.

Despite this positive activity there were some challenges to be addressed. Firstly, the Institution had lost touch with the membership. This was epitomised by fact that members were not actively encouraged to stand for Council and that the Council minutes were not published. It was a huge relief to me that these issues had already been recognised by the Trustees and they had initiated a programme of activity in 2016 to address them.

Secondly, the approach to global outreach had focused on engaging with a diverse chemical engineering community before resilient and scalable processes had been given time to bed in. As a result, we had recruited significant numbers of students and graduates with limited means to mentor them through the qualifications process. This had led us to a position whereby the percentage of professionally qualified members had fallen to around 28% of the total membership.

[N.B. This has now improved to above 31% overall and is above 36% in our primary centres; the UK and Australia. I would like to see this figure rise to 40% or above; in-line with our sister Institutions.]

I was therefore keen from an early stage to re-focus IChemE's efforts to provide a stronger emphasis on our two primary functions: acting as the professional qualifying body for chemical engineers; and delivering the foremost learned society for chemical engineering. Both functions are clearly linked to our charitable objects; to promote, foster and develop the advancement of chemical engineering for the benefit of society, and to ensure that we support members throughout their professional careers.

My journey began quite simply, through conversations with our membership. These valuable interactions provided some real food for thought and informed my proposals for a refreshed strategy. In addition, I had started to look at the detail of the proposed changes to our governance, picking up on the work started by John McGagh and David Brown, my predecessor, in 2016.

It's no secret that there were some bumps in the road along the way. Whilst the recommendations for governance reform were being carefully considered, an EGM (Extraordinary General Meeting) was requested in October and subsequently held in January 2018. [Whilst over 70% of those who voted supported the Council's motion](#), a significant number of voting members expressed their frustration with the status quo. It was therefore vital that as Council adjusted its strategy and developed its plans it continued to listen to the views of *all* members, not just those who had given their support. With this in mind, the Trustee's attention focused on accelerating the governance reform timetable, to ensure that the mechanisms for improved member involvement in decision-making were established as soon as was practicable.

An [open invitation for nominations to the Board of Trustees](#) was called in February, swiftly followed by [finalised proposals](#) for the modernisation of our governance in April. It was pleasing to see that these

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proposals were [approved](#) by more than 92% of those whose votes were cast at the AGM in May 2018 and that we had a keen interest in standing for Council from across the qualified membership. Ken Rivers' in presenting his [Presidential Address](#), welcomed our newly elected Trustees, encouraging them to continue the broad membership engagement that had developed during the election hustings.

At the end of June this year, the new Board of Trustees gathered in Rugby to receive their formal induction and briefing. During the meeting, we were delighted to receive the notification from the Privy Council Office that Her Majesty the Queen had overseen the approval of the amendments to our [Royal Charter and By-laws](#), which gave us the 'green light' to [press ahead with the governance reforms](#). I was also happy to see that the new Board of Trustees, as Council could now be called, took this opportunity to confirm that they wished to continue following the direction of travel that had been set out earlier in the year, focusing on the Institution's two primary functions (Qualifying Body and Learned Society).

Subsequently, at their first formal Board meeting on 12 July, the Trustees also gave their support for my proposal to create a staff structure that was aligned to and able to support the delivery of the updated *Strategy 2022*, which has been agreed in outline and will be published once finalised in October.

Strategy 2022 in simple terms, will set out the goals for IChemE over the next few years, so that as we enter our centenary year, we will be fit and ready to face the next 100 years. It builds upon the 'We Are IChemE' work that was consulted on with members in late 2016 and focuses on: maintaining standards and accessible routes to professionally qualified membership; valuing and sharing knowledge across both existing and emerging areas of chemical engineering practice; and ensuring that members can engage with IChemE activities wherever and whenever they choose.

On 13 July, I briefed my staff on the changes that are required to align the organisation with the Trustees' vision as expressed in *Strategy 2022*. This included reducing the number of operating divisions from six to four.

I am therefore very grateful to Andy Furlong, former Director of Communications, and Justin Blades, former Deputy CEO, who both agreed to take this opportunity to shift their career direction towards roles that they have both been fostering for some time. As a part of a voluntary redundancy programme they both [stepped down on 31 July](#).

Inevitably this has meant a re-allocation of reporting lines internally, and some changes of responsibilities within the existing staff team. All of this requires consultation with the affected staff, and we are all currently undergoing a period of transition whilst the consultation and changes take place. Some new roles could require external recruitment and therefore the transition period may run until the end of October 2018. Once complete, the staff structure will be fully aligned to support the delivery of *Strategy 2022*.

Many of the Institution's outputs will be unaffected during this period, but inevitably a small number of outputs will experience disruption. We are of course firmly pushing ahead with the [creation of Congress](#), as this will be a key enabler for member engagement in the future. Your support and understanding during this transition period is very much appreciated.

You can also expect to see more detailed information about *Strategy 2022* in the Autumn, once final drafts have been agreed by the Trustees. I trust that you will embrace the changes we are making to deliver an Institution that is led by members, supports members and serves society.

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In the meantime, I encourage you to get involved, whether it's standing for Congress, supporting a nomination, or simply exercising your democratic right.

Thank you for continued support and I look forward to meeting as many of you that I can in the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Prichard', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jon Prichard
Chief Executive

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