

IHBC General Meeting: 26 March 2021

Chair's Report: Updated from the oral report to the General Meeting

29 March 2021

Introduction

Thank you for attending this General Meeting of the IHBC. It has only been a few months since our AGM, so why do we need another meeting so soon? As you will have read in the invitation to today's event, in approving our new Articles of Association, the question arose about whether they would allow us to hold entirely 'virtual' General Meetings. Covid Regulations allow them to take place at the present time, but we thought it would be prudent to clarify this issue for the future. Hence our meeting today and the Special Resolution, which should be self-explanatory.

In setting up the General Meeting, I thought that it might be useful to follow it by a Council Meeting to say more about our modernised governance and what it might mean for the future of the Institute. It will also give Members the opportunity to ask questions of IHBC staff and post-holders as well as giving them the opportunity to get more involved with the Institute.

IHBC up-date

Despite only four months elapsing since our AGM, there is much to report. In brief, here is a summary of current issues.

Impact of the Pandemic – this has obviously continued to be of concern to me and IHBC's Trustees. The financial measures instigated in 2020 have been serving us well, and we can look forward with cautious optimism as we move out of lockdown. I have continued to work with other parts of the historic environment sector to try and mitigate the worst effects of the pandemic on those who manage historic properties and are reliant on visitors for income. The next issue of *Context* has a digital theme and will include consideration of how the pandemic has affected working practices.

In terms of our finances, we have had only last-minute access to the draft accounts from our auditors – so our Treasurer cannot report on this in any useful detail – but we are very happy to say that the precautionary measures we have undertaken since the middle of last year have paid off. So while, understandably, we continue to face huge challenges to our services and operations, as reported at the AGM, we are confident that we can adapt successfully to weather this particular storm, not least through building on the lessons from our successful Virtual School last year in planning the 2021 Brighton School and linked MarketPlace, as discussed later.

New constitution and governance – the approval of our new Articles of Association at the last AGM was a major step forward in modernising the IHBC. We are now working on new byelaws to put in place our new working arrangements. As in architecture, the devil will be in the details, including the arrangements for appointing members of the IHBC Board.

In the interim, we are currently planning for the next AGM and linked elections in the next 12 months, and these will be held under the terms of our current Articles. So if you have an interest in getting involved as a trustee of the IHBC, be sure to let us know, initially by emailing our company Secretary Lydia Porter at admin@ihbc.org.uk.

Most relevant to our programme today is the development of the role and structure of the IHBC's new Council, a body that will be chaired by the IHBC President, Council's own elected representative in the future. The practical aspects of the new Council arrangements – and the huge opportunities these offer – also will be explored later.

Corporate Plan – we have a new Corporate Plan (CP25) was adopted at the AGM in December 2020. We are now reviewing its implementation informed by both new Articles and the effects of the pandemic. As reported to the AGM, we continue to see this as the most useful framework to inform our forward planning.

Annual Schools: Brighton 2021, the Heritage MarketPlace, and after – While the team of volunteers working on Aberdeen 2022 are keeping an eye on the programme options linked to the management of the pandemic for their School, we know that this year's Annual School, will be a virtual event. The Brighton 2021 'Virtual School' - on 17 and 18 June – will as usual focus on the Day School, on the Friday. We are also holding open an option of in-person events – dependent on progress with the pandemic – in the Autumn, as we know that everyone is keen to renew and rebuild our personal contacts, so of course we want to help as best we can.

Detailed arrangements for the Virtual School are currently being finalised, but the School will include an innovative 'MarketPlace' focused on offering CPD learning and networking opportunities, with virtual stalls available to rent at remarkably low cost.

The details are being continually updated on the linked School and MarketPlace websites. The special 'advance' news for this General Meeting is that we have confirmed two of the South East Branch's earliest 'wish list' of presenters, from when they began planning the Brighton School in 2019!

Jan Gehl will 'anchor' the morning session of the Day School on 18 June. He is an internationally renowned urbanist, based in Denmark, whose early activity as a conservation architect and heritage enthusiast shaped a then-radical agenda for what might be called 'planning for people'.

Donovan Rypkema, the lead heritage economist in the US and founder of PlaceEconomics, has an equally formidable international reputation. If his is a less press-friendly field, the focus of his work on the ways in which people and places interact – in the context of economics, but also far beyond that – is no less central to the 2021 School's focus!

Those international takes will be well grounded by UK-wide contributions, including especially a suite of 4 webinars with, on the Thursday, a strong focus on the host South East Branch's region. Altogether these represent the usual great-value CPD and networking support that the IHBC continues to specialise in offering members and linked sectors. So be sure to sign up for as much as you can, and to promote the opportunities there as widely as possible.

Conservation, Places and People APPG - We are continuing to develop our UK-wide, Westminster-based, All Party Parliamentary Group on 'Conservation, Places and People'. Its inaugural inquiry into '21st Century Places: Values and Benefits' will take place in stages over the next few months, a little delayed due both to pandemic impacts on those making submissions – indeed we are still awaiting one critical contribution. The operational complexities faced by the IHBC have also been a challenge, though an educational one, as we continue to learn how best to respond to the needs of the APPG's members, not least given the influx of new members since the AGM.

Early career support and apprenticeships– we are continuing to work with other organisations on the development of historic environment advice apprenticeships and offering advice to a new working group dealing with heritage construction specialists.

Partnerships and MOUs – you will know that we have been looking at creating more formal partnerships, using an agreed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to give structure and clarity to the corporate relationship. Last year we welcomed a new MOU with ALGAO:UK – the representative body for the UK’s local authority archaeologists - as detailed on our NewsBlogs. This year we are exploring options with the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain (SAHGB), starting with our formal support for an initiative of theirs, an award linked to heritage statements from private sector services. Our Vice Chair Lone Le Vay has kindly agreed to serve as our nominated judge.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) – Our monthly CPD newsletter which lists relevant short courses is proving to be popular with members. The planned series of IHBC-provided ‘local delivery’ CPD events was delayed in 2020 because of reduced capacity during the pandemic. However, we have now been able to make a start with a free CPD taster on retrofit on 29 March by IHBC trustee for our Wales Branch, John Edwards, with details on our events web pages.

Sustainability and climate change – Sustainability and the challenges of climate change span the spectrum of our operations. In addition, we are continuing to work with other organisations, from the international Climate Heritage Network to the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance (STBA). Influencing the COP26 (UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties) conference in Glasgow later this year is a priority. We will approach that mainly through such partnerships as well as through national link bodies such as BEFS - the Built Environment Forum Scotland – as well as The Heritage Alliance.

There will be an opportunity to discuss these, and other matters raised here after we take the vote on our Special Resolution, when the formal business of the General Meeting will close, and at the Council Meeting which follows these proceedings.

David McDonald
Chair, IHBC