**Chairman’s Annual Report 2017**

**Once again** the Institute has had a very active and successful year. Now in our 48th year the Institute has grown year on year. We have extend the range of training we offer, advocated more on behalf of good fisheries management and grown our involvement with like minded groups, to promote better fisheries management.

**The Council** met on 3 occasions during the year, overseeing the good governance of the organisation and moving forward new strategies. I would like to thank the members of Council for their good work over the year and I would also like to welcome on to Council Ted Potter who I have no doubt will be a great asset. The Directors of the Executive Committee have put in a major effort to ensure the Institute runs smoothly and the decisions of Council are implemented. Our new Executive Director David Bunt has undertaken his new role with great energy ensuring the organisation is managed on a day to day basis. I would like to thank the Directors for their work and in particular to David and our President Peter Spillett for their help and advise over the last year.

Leading our operations is Paul Coulson who has done an immense amount of work for the Institute. Paul was ably assisted by Iain Tuner and I would like to thank both for their efforts. Commencing our year at the 47th Annual Conference Paul and Iain were to the fore in developing and managing the Conference in Norwich, which was great success attracting 120 delegates.

With the increase in the development of renewable energy in Europe the Institute’s **Specialist Conference** this year looked at “Renewable Energy and Fisheries”. It was held in Newport, in associations with our Welsh Branch, over two days. Speakers from UK, Canada, France, Korea and Ireland reviewed how to meet renewable energy targets, whilst protecting the environments in which the schemes will sit.

As part of the Institute’s ongoing support for **sustainable eel management**,the Institute, in association with the Zoological Society of London and the UK’s Environment Agency hosted the First International Eel Science Symposium in London.

The meeting, over three days, was a great success with delegates from 25 countries. The Symposium provided a global forum for scientists and researchers to present the latest data and initiatives on the biology and management of eels. It is hoped to host the 2nd *International Eel Science Symposium in 2020.*

**Ian Welby, our Training Director**,with his dedicated team,continuedthe Institute’s long standing Fisheries Management Diploma and Certificate courses. These continue to be well supported, with our short courses such as basic fish rescue course, electric fishing, etc doing well also. Our training work with NGO’s such as that with the Angling Trust on fisheries enforcement continues.

As I mentioned last year the Institute was requested to develop a new fisheries course for new Environment Agency staff. This was developed and the first batch of staff are now going through the programme, which will comprise of 6 modules and a project over the two years.

On the back of this successful course the EA have requested the Institute to develop a new course for anglers. This course will be rolled out in a series of weekend workshops over the next two years, starting in November. Areas to be addressed include; water quality, fish health, predation, stock management and assessment, habitat improvement.

Financially the Institute is in a good place. Our new **Finance Director Ian Dolben** has done an excellent job in managing the Institutes finances throughout the year. He will outline these in more details shortly. Suffice to say our income for 2017 has seen an increase enabling us to invest more in services provided by the Institute.

Our membership remains steady and under our new **Director of Membership Paul Johnson**, a new membership Committee is being developed and work is to commence shortly to advance a strategy to enhance membership and our offering to members.

**Adrian Taylor, External Affairs Director** continued to coordinate responses to consultations and statements. Adrian has also been working with external bodies to promote the aims of the Institute. Under the editorship of Lawrence Talks the Institutes’ magazine FISH has gone from strength to strength, but this year saw a major change in the magazine. In an initiative led by Adrian and Lawrence FISH went digital and was well received. It is expected digital FISH to achieve 80% uptake by members in this first year.

The Institute **Director of Policy, Miran Aprahamian** has developed and published the Institute’s position on Brexit, which is a very comprehensive document, and has been well received.

**Our Branches and Specialist Sections**

Our Branches continue to be active locally with some more active than others.The London Branch again developed a number of local workshops including hosting a successful ‘Stillwater Management Workshop’ in March 2017. Representatives from local angling clubs, consultants and private interests heard how managing of Stillwater habitats in a sustainable manner, for the benefit of fish, wildlife and people.

**The Scottish Branch** has been very dynamic running its annual Bailiff training programme and Conference, whilst contributing greatly to the Scotland Wild Fisheries Reform proposals. It was disappointing to learn of the Scottish Governments decision to row back many of the modernisation elements proposed. . Many people including Institute members had worked very hard to bring together proposals that would put in place a world class system of fisheries management.

Institute members, working with other the stakeholders will continue with the work of reforming and developing fisheries management in Scotland. Indeed the Institute are still working on a new training matrix which will be rolled out to those managing fisheries in Scotland.

The Ireland Branch was heavily involved in the planning and management of this years 48th Annual Conference.

The Institute runs 5 Specialist Section who produce position statement and give advice to Council. Among others our Fish and Environment Section produced a position statement, following consultations, on the reintroduction of the European Beaver to the UK. This is just some of the work Our Branches and Specialist Sections have undertaken.

This Institute is all about its members and how they wish to see fisheries management develop. I would like to thank all Branch and Specialist Sections members for their time and dedication without whose work we could not continue.

It is now becoming more difficult for members to travel and take time off work for Branch meetings and organising Branch events. While face to face meetings are the best way of developing a Branch and the comradeship among the members, using modern technology can be a great way of getting business done. The organising committee of the Ireland Branch for this year’s Annual Conference used teleconferencing a great deal throughout the process and found it worked well. The Institute has acquired the use of ZOOM, a teleconferencing system. Led Paul Coulson this system is available for Institute business and I would encourage both the Branches and the Specialist Groups to use it. I would also encourage members to get involved in these Groups. Let your voice be heard and help grow the aims of your Institute.

**Partnerships**

To extend its reach in promoting better fisheries management the Institute continues to work with other groups with like-minded views. We have worked with Society for the Environment, Countryside Link, Salmon & Trout Conservation and others to co-sign responses to a number of issues including to the proposal to ban the use of plastic microbeads in cosmetics and personal care products in the UK. We have also written to the Prime Minister of the UK to stress our shared views regarding the need for the environment to be included in the White Paper on Brexit.

The Institute was represented at the annual meeting of NASCO, on this occasion by Nigel Milner (Bangor University) who did an excellent job.

There would seem to be little good news on status of the salmon stock. Despite this the Government and Non – Government groups are working hard to address many of the issues affecting salmon, their work can be seen at <http://www.nasco.int/>

In England the EA have brought together the main fisheries NGO’s including the Institute, to work on Fisheries issues. In recent times they have been assisting in developing a new policy on salmon management, and during the consultation period the Institute responded with our position statement.

**We have received extensive** assistance from many NGO’s and Government bodies in developing and running our training programmes, developing submissions, and advocating on behalf of sound fisheries management. I would like to express our deep gratitude for their support and help.

Overseas we continue our relationships with colleagues in Europe and also continue to develop our long standing partnerships with the American Fisheries Society. AFS were represented at our Annual Conference in Norwich and I had the honour of representing the Institute in Florida.

The Institute of Fisheries Management is a great organisation and one which I am proud off. Through its members it has made a difference to Fisheries Management. We need to maintain and develop the Institute and through its members and the people we work with, we need to redouble our efforts in seeking to educate, protect and enhance fisheries.