



Institute of Fisheries Management

Dedicated to professional and sustainable fisheries management

MINUTES of the fifty first Annual General Meeting of the Institute of Fisheries Management, Monday 19 October 2020.

1. Welcome – Chris Mills IFM President

Chris Mills welcomed everyone to the 51st IFM AGM, which was held virtually via Zoom. Chris reflected on what has been a challenging year but highlighted how the Institute has made considerable progress thanks to the hard work of the IFM's officers in particular Paul Coulson and Iain Turner.

2. Apologies for absence.

15 apologies were received prior to the meeting, which included: John Ellis, Ian Cowx, Godfrey Williams, Luke Mitchell, Chris Williams, Chris Poupard, Ted Potter, Lawrence Powellain, Stewart-Russon, Bruce Banfield Taylor, Bob Laughton, Paul O' Doherty, Tony Bostock and Steve Axford.

In all 31 attended the AGM with quorum being 20.

3. To confirm the Minutes of the Fiftieth Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 8 October 2019

These were sent out in advance of the meeting and reviewed screen by screen. No comments were raised. The proposer for the minutes was Iain Turner and the seconder was Lawrence Talks. The poll showed all in favour.

4. Progress towards charitable status – David Bunt IFM Chairman

Why

Part of the purpose of the AGM was to give members an update on progress towards the IFM becoming a charity, which the Institute has been considering for a number of years. The benefits include taking advantage of tax benefits, gift aid, legacies and donations, access to grant funding and it is compatible with the Institute's current form of investment. The disadvantages are none (although charities are not allowed to pursue political lobbying, which IFM doesn't do anyway), though it will require a significant amount of effort, including changing the rules and constitution, governance, accounting and the need to make an application to the Charities Commission.

What

IFM intends to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which will mean changes to our constitution and rules. These aren't major changes. The proposed charitable objectives are:

“To promote for the public benefit, the advancement of the science and practice of sustainable fisheries and aquatic ecosystem protection, conservation and management by:

- advancement of education, training, study and research about fisheries and aquatic ecosystem management,
- promotion of high standards and best practices throughout the fisheries management profession.”

These are, we believe, compatible with what the Institute does at the moment with rewording to demonstrate that we are doing these things for the public good.

How

These are proposals and open to consultation. In becoming a charity the proposal is to change our governance structure from Council (direction & accountability), Executive (implementation) and Membership (members, decisions via AGM and consultation) to a Board of Trustees (direction & accountability), Executive (implementation), Advisory Council (advise Executive and Trustees, represents membership) and Membership (members, decisions via AGM and consultation) including a President to Chair the Board of Trustees, the combining of the Chairman and Executive Directors roles to create a Chief Executive Officer, with the CEO chairing the Executive and Advisory Council.

When

Consultation will run in the new year in 2021 and we will need the membership’s approval to proceed. The aim is to submit an application sometime after January 2021. Thanks were recorded to Valerie Holt and Steve Axford in particular for all their hard work in progressing our move towards charitable status.

Question: Are positions elected by the membership? David responded yes, at the AGM.

5. Annual Report of the Council – Chairman, David Bunt.

Topics covered included governance, finance, marketing and communications, training, conferences, membership, professional status, branches, policy development, partnerships, business development, staff and officers.

Governance. The Council met twice with 30 members in attendance over the last year to set the direction of the Institute. The Executive met at least quarterly with 12 members in attendance to implement the Business Plan as set by Council. Our AGM was held during our Annual Conference to report direct to members. A key topic of discussion during the year has been the Institute working towards charitable status and developing a five year strategic plan.

Finance. Ian Dolben, our Director of Finance, was congratulated for his MBE for services to the environment after 40 years with the Environment Agency and the Institute. Despite the considerable challenges of Covid-19 the Institute maintained a positive balance, which is a tremendous achievement. There have been fewer courses and conferences in person but more on-line courses, less travel and meeting expenses and we had fortnightly reviews to monitor the situation. We were very pleased that we didn’t need to furlough any staff and we didn’t need to withdraw from our investment.

Marketing and Communications. Thanks were made to Paul Johnston for organising a members’ survey and to all who responded. The feedback has been very helpful in informing the Institute and enabling it to move forward on a number of areas including: its membership offer, 5-year strategy, membership categories, its website, partnerships and marketing.

Our website has undergone a transformation. It is our window to the world, we used our investment to pay for the changes and it is now much more user friendly.

Our flagship magazine continues to get better and better with thanks to Lawrence Talks and now to our new editors Karen Twine and Harriet Alvis.

Training is at the core of the Institute and we are now the biggest provider of fisheries training in the UK by number of students (242) and it brings in 40% of the IFM's income. Huge thanks were given to Ian Wellby and the IFM's training team for all their fantastic work.

Conferences in 2020 were all online. Our Festival of Fisheries is to have branch events 2-5 November 2020 and our Annual Conference 9-12 November 2020. On the 9 November the session on the European Sturgeon project will be free thanks to sponsorship by the Blue Marine Foundation. Further themes will be Fish health & welfare, Salmon conservation and Global eel science. Please register to go at IFM events.

Membership. With the Institute being a membership-based organisation we have been aware that membership has been declining and so we have been working to reverse this trend. Following the members survey, we have set a target of increasing membership by 50% over the next five years. Action is to include focussing on recruitment, retention, members' benefits, developing a membership pack, simplification of membership categories, making it easier to renew, introducing 365-day membership, analysing the fisheries sector, surveying fisheries professionals and promotion and marketing. We offer professional status through SocEnv and had three new Chartered Environmentalists in 2020 giving us a total of 105. IFM provides CPD opportunities and we are going to trial securing C.Env in a day. There is also a new award coming from SocEnv called the Registered Environmental Technician, which is a step towards C.Env status. Branches have been less active in 2020 for obvious reasons and so that's why there are special branch events during the Festival of Fisheries with events run by London & SE, Ireland, Wales and Scotland branches.

Influencing Policy. One of the areas that we do, is advocacy to influence government policy and legislation and represent the profession. We produce evidence-based objective position statements. We also attend the Environment Agency's England Fisheries Group, sit on the Environmental Policy Forum and are members of Wildlife and Countryside Link. Examples of issues we have sought to influence include: the Fisheries Bill, EA Water Framework Directive and Challenges and Choices, we produced a guide to biosecurity, a guide to managing fisheries during prolonged dry weather, we have commented on beaver introduction and made a representation to Natural England about their proposals at Hoveton Great Broad.

Partnerships. We work actively in partnership with a wide range of organisations, an example is our work with the Fisheries Society of the British Isles (fsbi). We are in discussions with fsbi on discounted joint membership, events, joint publicity etc.

Business development. We have published a 5-year strategic plan (2020-25) on our website, which sets out our key aims, including being the membership body of choice, a charity, training, effective influencer and effective/efficient with net zero carbon emissions.

Officers. We have two full-time staff, Paul Coulson and Iain Turner, 35 officers, 10 committees and 9 branches, all of whom do a tremendous job.

Thank you to all officers and members for your support to the Institute.

The proposer to agree the report was Peter Spillett and the seconder Pete Turner. The poll showed all in favour.

The Powerpoint version of the Chairman's annual report is available on the IFM website [here](#) [Paul to provide].

6. Financial report and accounts – Director of Finance, Ian Dolben MBE.

The 2019 report was presented. Subscriptions were slightly down on 2018 but still about £30,000. There was a £4,750 tax liability for the £25,000 withdrawal from the investment in 2018 and there is a provision for future taxation of £18,660 based on growth of the investment, though this may change in the future. Training was comparable with 2018 with a surplus of £37,186. Concerning the commercial accounts, the FISH income needs an adjustment to reflect the full income from advertising. FISH since moving to an electronic version is now paying for itself. Conference accounts showed a healthy surplus of £33,262. Overall, the balance sheet showed an overall balance of £479,481 the great majority of which is our capital investment. This is an increase of £14,000 on 2018. Thanks were given to Paul Coulson and Iain Turner for all their hard work.

The proposer to agree the report was Valerie Holt and the seconder Lawrence Talks. The poll showed all in favour.

Chris Mills highlighted that it should be recognised that the healthy state of IFM finances is down to historic decisions and the foresight of predecessors managing our finances prudently and making a sound investment for the future.

7. Election of Officers and Council members

- Chris Mills was elected as President with the proposer Pete Turner and seconder Peter Spillett. The poll showed all in favour.
- The Vice Presidents Dr. D. Cragg-Hine, A. Neville Jones, V. Holt, R.L. Welcomme were all elected, with the proposer Lawrence Talks and the seconder Iain Turner.
- The re-elected Council members were Shaun Leonard, Paul Johnston, Ted Potter, Nicola Teague, Robert Clark and Barry Bendall with the proposer Jim Lyons and Peter Spillett as the seconder.

8. Subscriptions

Council recommended that there are no increases in subscriptions in 2020. The proposer was Peter Turner and the seconder was Jim Lyons and the poll showed all in favour.

9. Appointment of auditors

Council recommends that Girling & Company Chartered Accountants are appointed as auditors for 2020. The proposer was Iain Turner and the seconder was Valerie Holt and the poll showed all in favour.

Chris closed by thanking everyone for attending and thanked the Institute's membership for sticking with us during this difficult year. The challenge now is to grow our membership. We will review how the virtual AGM has gone, which brings with it convenience, a reduced in travel and less carbon impact. Finally, Chris promoted the Festival of Fisheries.

Thank you for attending.

Lawrence Talks
Executive Director