Minutes of the 5th Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 1st April 2009
Seminar Room, National Oceanography Centre, Southampton, UK

1. Attendance, Welcome and Apologies for absence

1.1 Attendance
Adil Ali • Helen Atkinson • Dirk Bakker • Matthew French • John Dillon-Leetch • Jeff Faulkner • Mike Flaherty • Robert Fisher • David Goodfellow • Trish Groves • Tim Hallpike • Geoffrey Haskins • William Heaps • David Hitchcock • Gwyn Jones • Peter Kelly • Andrew McMurtie • Stuart McVey • Jerry Monk • Tom Nicols • Carl Oberman • David Parker • Steve Pearce • John Pinder • Neil Pittam • Simon Richardson • Mike Sebbage • Rob Spillard • Simon Squibb • Graham Tattersall • Mike Tranah • Andy Waddington • James Williams • Scott Winning

1.2 Welcome
Chairman, William Heaps, welcomed those present and opened the meeting at 12:09hrs.

1.3 Apologies for absence were received from
Victor Abbott • Mike Barritt • Steve Bennett • Ernie Biddle • Paul Edge • Steve Johns • Debbie North • Richard Read • Ian Russell • Steve Shipman • Tony White • Mike Wright

2. Consideration and acceptance of the Minutes of the 4th AGM held on 12th March 2008
The Minutes were accepted without amendment.

Proposed by: William Heaps    Seconded by: John Pinder

The Report was accepted without amendment.

Proposed by: Jerry Monk    Seconded by: Mike Sebbage

4. Appointment of Auditors to audit the Society's accounts for the year ending 31 March 2009
The Chairman reported that the auditors had continued to provide excellent service and therefore proposed that Simpkins Edwards of Michael House, Castle Street, Exeter, EX4 3LQ should once again be appointed as the Society's auditors and financial advisers.

Proposed by: Mike Tranah    Seconded by: Simon Squibb

5. Empower the Management Committee to fix the remuneration of the Auditors
It was agreed that the Management Committee be empowered to fix the remuneration of the auditors.

Proposed by: Geoffrey Haskins    Seconded by: Gwyn Jones

Hon. Treasurer, Peter Kelly, presented a summary of the Society's finances over the last twelve months which would form the basis of the audited Annual Accounts due to be published later in the year.

He noted that owing to the combination of organising Hydro8 and Helen Atkinson's ill health preventing the publication of Soundings it had been a fairly quiet year financially. On top of this, as predicted at the previous AGM, there had been a significant shortfall in the subscription received during the year. This resulted from Royal Bank of Scotland's decision to change the Society's account type account number in the weeks running up to April 2008, thereby effectively cancelling all the existing Standing Order mandates.

Peter reported that the £10,000 THS UK had lent to IFHS in late 2004 had now been repaid, as had the money lent to Hydro8 as a start up fund.

He noted that the final accounts for Hydro8 were yet to be completed and that about £9,000 potential income was still due in (some may not be recovered). However he was happy to report the highest ever attendance for a UK-hosted Hydro - 723 delegate days, with delegates representing 22 countries. He was also pleased note that after contributing in excess of £80,000 to IFHS (and the old THS) by organising the Hydro conferences in 1999, 2001 and 2004, THS UK would finally receive direct financial benefit from organising Hydro8. He predicated that, in line with the new procedures for Hydro conferences, THS UK would receive something in the region of £20,000.
Following a brief discussion on the likelihood of being able to get any compensation from the bank for the loss of subscription income, it was proposed that the Hon. Treasurer’s Report be accepted.

Proposed by: James Williams    Seconded by: David Hitchcock

7. Election of Society Officer – Hon. Secretary

The Chairman reminded the meeting that in accordance with the Articles of Association the Society's Honorary Secretary and Treasurer are each elected to serve for a two-year period and that, to provide some continuity in the management of the Society, the officers retire from their posts in alternating years - the Hon. Secretary in odd years and the Hon. Treasurer in even years. Accordingly Steve John’s period of office as Hon. Secretary would end at the conclusion of the AGM.

William noted that owing to pressure of work Steve did not wish to stand for re-election and that no nominations had been received for the post prior to the deadline. However he reported that Mike Tranah was willing to be co-opted to the post. There being no other candidates wishing to stand for election it was proposed and unanimously agreed that Mike Tranah should be appointed Hon. Secretary.

Proposed by: William Heaps    Seconded by: Jerry Monk

8. Confirmation of the Chairman, Hon. Treasurer, Regional Representatives, co-opted members of the Management Committee and THS UK Federation Representative

The various posts were confirmed as follows:

Chairman: William Heaps
Hon. Treasurer: Peter Kelly
Regional Representatives:
- East Anglia Region: Mike Tranah
- Southern Region: William Heaps
- South West Region: David Parker
- North West Region: Ian Holden
- The Hydrographic Society in Ireland: Seán Cullen
- The Hydrographic Society in Scotland: Mike Flaherty
- Student Chapter: Vacant
- Middle East Region: Adil Ali
- International Chapter: Vacant

Co-opted members:
- Manager and Editor of Soundings: Helen Atkinson
- THS UK Federation Rep: William Heaps

William appealed for suitable candidates to volunteer for the vacant posts of International Chapter Representative and Student Chapter Rep. Adil Ali volunteered to represent the International Chapter in addition to the Middle East Region and James Williams offered to be the Student Rep.


William reported that he had been elected Chairman of the Federation at its AGM in Liverpool, immediately after Hydro8. He would be supported in this role by Aubrey Price of South Africa who had been elected Vice-Chairman. This is now a two-year post, with a maximum of two successive terms possible. He indicated that he planned to steer the IFHS back towards its original objective of being a simple umbrella organisation with most of the day-to-day activity being conducted within the national societies.

At an IFHS Executive Committee meeting following its AGM, the Exec had agreed upon new arrangements for the publication of The Hydrographic Journal in 2009, which were explained in his first ‘Chairman’s Column’ in edition No. 128/129. Publication of the first of the two trial Journals produced in Australasia, using new production methods, was anticipated within the next month.

William reported that the Federation had received positive approaches from several other national hydrographic societies which were not currently members, and that the current members were working together to facilitate an affordable subscription rate for potential new members.

He noted that all the national societies were now working towards value and overall effectiveness. William was pleased to report that other national Representatives now shared his vision of reduced bureaucracy in favour of national autonomy.

As well as a return to regular Journals, the IFHS has committed to improving the image and value of its website and a new site should be online within a few months.

Finally, he reminded everyone that Hydro9 would be hosted by The Hydrographic Society of South Africa in Cape Town from 10-12th November. He hoped some of those present would be able to support the first African Hydro conference.
10. Reports from the Regional Representatives

10.1 Southern Region by Neil Pittam, Hon. Secretary

Neil Pittam reported that, following falling attendances at some of its meetings, the Southern Region had decided to hold fewer meetings in the hope that people would make more effort to attend them. Although most of the Region’s meetings are held onboard SS Shieldhall, the Committee recognised that there was a need to hold activities in other parts of the Region e.g. London or Brighton.

The Committee had also decided to introduce more social events into the calendar including the annual summer barbecue in June (held in conjunction with Seawork) and a mince pies and mulled wine evening following the AGM in December.

The Region’s main focus for 2009 would be a seminar in October entitled ‘Hydrography and Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure – Measure Once, Use Many’. UK National Hydrographer, Rear Admiral Ian Moncrieff, had already agreed to be the keynote speaker. The other speakers were still to be confirmed although many expressions of interest had already been received.

10.1 South West Region by David Parker, Chairman

David Parker reported that the South West Region continued to co-host meetings at the Royal Plymouth Corinthian Yacht Club with the South West Region of the RICS Geomatics Professional Group. This helped to spread the costs between the two organisations and also boosted attendance. Meetings regularly attracted anything between 25 and 50 people. David noted that the Region’s demographic was split almost equally between retired members, students, and people actively working in the profession.

On the financial front, David reported that the Region had almost no assets whatsoever. Its only real expenditure was the hire of the meeting venue for every other meeting (RICS paying for the remainder) but conversely the Region hadn’t received a cash injection for many years. The South West Region had therefore recently found it necessary to call upon the centrally allocated £250 for Regional activities.

David noted that there had been a good range of presentations over the last year, from local, national and international speakers. However in order to keep the programme fresh he had decided to ask each of the five local Committee members to find two speakers for the 2009-10 programme, thereby drawing on a wider circle of contacts and areas of expertise.

10.3 North West Region

No report received

10.4 The Hydrographic Society in Scotland by Mike Flaherty, Chairman

Mike reportedly that he had recently taken over from Andy McMurtrie as Chairman of THSiS and its Rep on the THS UK Management Committee.

He noted that it had been another busy year for THSiS with the regular monthly meetings, attended by 40-50 people, offering a good range of speakers and topics. In addition the annual Members’ Dinner had taken place in February; this was attended by 130 people dining at tables booked by 13 companies. THSiS’s HydroFest 2009 had taken place in late March and had been attended by more than 50 people, including 30 students from Plymouth and Glasgow.

10.5 East Anglia Region

No report received

10.6 The Hydrographic Society in Ireland

No report received

10.7 Middle East Region by Adil Ali

Adil reported that there had been 5 or 6 evening meetings at the Meridien Hotel over the last year with a maximum attendance of 75.

11. Address by the Chairman of the Management Committee

William Heaps began by thanking Ocean Business, and in particular Versha Carter, for providing a venue for this AGM free of charge.

He noted that 2008 had been a difficult year for THS UK and, more recently, for several sectors of industry once the recession began to bite. Without doubt, Hydro8 had been both the highlight and the principal focus of the last year. It had involved an immense amount of work – particularly for Helen and Peter – but at the same time had been very enjoyable and rewarding. He believed that the delegates and exhibitors had found the event very worthwhile and that, coupled with the financial return, meant that THS UK should be proud of its achievements.

He reported that the Regions – particularly Scotland, Southern, South West and the Middle East – continued to be very active and serve their members well with a range of technical and social events on offer.

The Society as a whole had once again maintained its presence at shows like Oceanology International, Ocean Business and Seawork, where it was able to negotiate a free stand in exchange for advertising in
Soundings and on the website. These events have always provided ideal opportunities to attract new members and for existing members to meet up with Helen and the rest of the Management Committee – frequently resulting in some very useful discussions. The Society had also continued to be associated with several other events, publications and organisations e.g. Marine Measurement Forum, Sea Technology, Royal Institute of Navigation etc. even if it didn’t always have a physical presence within those entities.

William was sure that all members would have noticed the recent lack of publications (The Hydrographic Journal and Soundings) which he reported was the result of the Society's only employee suffering from a recurring illness over a protracted period. He and Helen both apologised for this situation and hoped that members would be patient and understanding while she recovered and caught up on the backlog.

William thanked those members who had responded to Helen's chasing regarding the standing order problem and had subsequently paid their 'missing' 2008-9 subscriptions. He encouraged those who still hadn't paid for 2008-9 to rectify this as soon as possible.

William reported that the Management Committee's hopes for 2009 and beyond were to organise more seminars and small events and to start to address more educational matters, thereby inspiring more ‘new blood’ into the hydrographic profession. He concluded this report by asking everyone present to encourage young hydrographers to join the Society, get involved with its activities and contribute to the future of both THS UK and their profession.

12. Award of Emeritus Membership

The Chairman noted from time-to-time the Society awarded this honour in recognition of a member's exceptional conduct in their support of THS UK's objectives and their outstanding contribution to the profession as a whole. He was delighted that the Management Committee had decided to bestow another Emeritus Membership at this meeting. There had been instantaneous and unanimous agreement on the most deserving candidate – Peter Kelly, who had been elected Hon. Treasurer exactly 12 years ago to the day and had served in that post ever since.

William read out a citation (which will be reproduced in full in Soundings No. 55) before awarding Peter with a commemorative certificate.

13. Any other business

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and noted that he hoped to see them all at the next AGM, which was expected to take place during Oceanology International 2010. He then closed the meeting at 13:10.