

From the Chief Executive

By David Parker

Interim Chief Executive - THS UK



In the last issue of soundings I hinted at some new ideas that we were trying to bring to life this year to improve our service to the profession and sector, and increase the significance of The Hydrographic Society UK (THS UK) and our friends in the International Federation of Hydrographic Societies (IFHS). I am now able to give some detail on our key proposal currently under development – an international Hydrographic Professional Accreditation Scheme (HPAS).

HPAS will certify hydrographers to a relevant level within the international hydrographic profession. The scheme would be initially developed by and managed by THS UK but overseen by the IFHS Member Societies. As well as providing a valuable service to members and the profession, the scheme will also increase the profile and relevance of the IFHS and its constituent members internationally.

Hydrographers will be able to apply for one of four levels of certification and will be assessed by a panel drawn from IFHS members against a published framework. It is intended to have the scheme accredited by the FIG/IHO/ICA International Board of Standards and Competence (IBSC).

It is critical that professionals engaged in hydrography and similar seabed mapping activities are suitably educated, trained, and have appropriate experience. This scheme is designed to recognise and categorise such individuals, both to ensure appropriate personnel are engaged, and to protect and promote appropriate professional standards.

Additionally, it is often a requirement of contracts, particularly government contracts, that lead surveyors must have completed an educational course which is Category A or B accredited (sometimes, *or equivalent* is stated). Taking the UK example, this presents a growing challenge; since the University of Plymouth lost its Category A accreditation in 2017, there are currently only two limited options for completing such a course or degree in the UK, and one of those options is closed to civilians. Consequently, the number of domestic hydrographers being able to claim an education to any internationally accepted standard will diminish. The current system also only recognises a course, rather than the resultant hydrographer. Some hydrographers may have followed a different educational route, their course may have lost accreditation while remaining largely unchanged, and

others may have built up their education and experience through a variety of on-the-job opportunities.

The proposed accreditation scheme seeks to promote and recognise the education, experience, skills, and the continuing professional development (CPD) of hydrographers and accredit them to recognised levels. This, in turn, will be valuable to industry to ensure the right capabilities for a role. The third benefit is that such a scheme will increase the relevance and profile of both THS UK and the IFHS.

Canada and Australia have had individual professional accreditation schemes in place for several years, and many contracts issued in those countries may demand accredited hydrographic surveyors in key positions. THS UK would seek to agree equivalency with these schemes to avoid localism. In addition to the equivalent levels seen in other schemes, the THS UK/IFHS scheme will also include levels which identify professionals at graduate (level 3) and management (level 0) levels.

The levels to be offered by the scheme are as follows:

Level 3	Student, apprentice or survey assistant. No experience required.
Level 2	Approximately 2 years' experience + relevant qualifications (typically Junior Surveyor or Survey Technician).
Level 1	Approximately 5 years' experience + relevant qualifications (typically Project or Charge Surveyor, Party Chief).
Level 0	Approximately 10 years' experience + relevant qualifications (typically Programme Manager or Similar).

In terms of educational requirements, candidates will either provide a certificate of a Category A or B course completed or evidence to show how S5 guidelines have been sufficiently met through an alternative pathway.

Applicants will be assessed by a panel of 2-3 suitable assessors from within the profession, with at least one from a different country to the applicant. A larger panel will then undertake final review and normalisation of each intake. There will be an ongoing

requirement for CPD, and the scheme will also have a post-nominals structure.

As I have outlined, operating an IFHS Hydrographic Professional Accreditation Scheme is not without its challenges or risks but it should provide huge benefits to the members of all IFHS societies, as well as other hydrographic professionals not currently affiliated to any of these organisations. Moreover, it would raise the international profiles and perceptions of THS UK and the IFHS as significant voices for hydrography and upholders of standards within the profession.

There are many more details already under development, and we will be able to provide those details in future issues. I hope you will be excited by this prospect and recognise the benefits it could bring to our profession.

Benefits to Individuals

Promoting the highest levels of professionalism within the hydrographic sector.

Providing a clear professional development route.

Providing improved recognition of skills and experience.

Providing additional routes into and within the profession for those who have not undertaken accredited courses.

Once established, providing access to roles requiring a set standard or capability.

Provide a system for mentoring.

Benefits to Organisations

Promoting the highest levels of professionalism within the hydrographic sector.

Helping to categorise professionals against an agreed and transparent standard.

Providing a framework for staff to develop within their profession.

By expanding the pool of professionals within a rigorous framework, increase the number of recognised professionals that can be deployed.

For contracting organisations, set minimum standards for individual professionals, rather than the universities or courses they attended.

Once established, providing access to roles requiring a set standard of capability

Benefits to IFHS Member Societies

Promoting the profession.

Protecting the profession.

Increasing relevance and status of national societies and the IFHS.

Increasing membership of national societies.

From the Federation

By John Fraser

THS UK representative on the IFHS Board



Since the last report in Soundings, the International Federation of Hydrographic Societies (IFHS) welcomes Lieutenant Commander Eric Langlois as the new President, taking over from long standing board member Mr. Holger Klindt who has retired. Eric brings with him strong energy and an appetite for modernisation and greater relevance within the global environment.

For those of you unfamiliar with the work of IFHS, the Federation engages member Societies from around the world – such as The Hydrographic Society UK – into a collaborative and coordinated partnership,

working to reaffirm international influence whilst maintaining respect for hydrographic professionals and organisations at governmental and intergovernmental level. The current board is made up of six representative members, for the seven active member Societies.

Activity within the Federation includes ‘Hydro Conferences’ coordination, student awards, commendation to industry initiatives, special publications, representation at international gatherings and alignment of National Societies on subject matters of interest. These activities are