

Council Matters

The most important decision at a meeting is not necessarily the one that occupies most time. IMA Council took less than two minutes to confirm Nominating Committee's recommendation that Nira Chamberlain should be the next President of the IMA. Nira becomes President elect in the first Council meeting chaired by the new IMA President Alistair Fitt. Thus the IMA Council meeting at the Royal Society on 21 March 2018 had all the elements of *A Christmas Carol*. The ghost of Presidents Past were present in the form of Robert MacKay and Chris Linton, the latter looking particularly relaxed and notably tie-less in the first Council meeting since he stepped down. The ghost of Presidents Present was made corporeal in the reassuring figure of Alistair Fitt, who seems to have an inside track into everything happening within the mathematical sciences firmament and beyond. And, after Council's decision, the ghost of Presidents Future was represented by Nira Chamberlain.



IMA President Alistair Fitt with Stephen Metcalfe after Council

Nira and Alistair reflect the diversity of the membership of the IMA: Alistair is from the academic community and Nira from the business community, but both represent mathematicians and the potential of mathematics (and potential mathematicians) in the best possible ways. As well as his analysis of commercial and industrial problems, Nira has been massively influential in promoting the power of mathematics to young people and as a role model for Black mathematicians. This simultaneous representation of the academic, the business, and the educational aspects of the mathematical sciences under one roof is, for me, the unique attraction of the IMA.

Inevitably, the first Council meeting of the year involves a fair amount of reporting dictated by legal requirements. Council received the Financial Statement for 2017 and the Trustees' Report, both of which are official documents provided to the Charities Commission. Since you are unlikely to go through the details of the finances in the Report to Members (also discussed at the meeting: look out, it

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may become glossy and have pictures) let me summarise. Despite having agreed to run a deficit of a bit over £100K in 2017 for strategic reasons (visibility and membership recruitment if

I remember rightly), the IMA made a £20K surplus on a turnover of just under £1.2 million. This was essentially due to a small number of exceptional items of income, journals and conferences both had better results than budgeted, and staff costs were lower than expected despite some real pressure on their time. The income of the IMA is very

dependent on journals (through OUP) and membership fees. It is always risky to be over-reliant on a few income streams, but many Learned Societies have this problem, and we have learned to manage the risk.

Following financial reporting we dwelt on complaint procedures. Every employer has a duty of care to employees, and we also have responsibilities to the public. David Youdan (Executive Director) had gone through our procedures with external legal advice and presented a revised set of complaints procedures which better reflect our institutional responsibilities and the responsibilities of our members to each other and the broader public. These are important issues and after some discussion about wording they were agreed.

Sensible arguments about strategy and resource allocation cannot happen without a clear sense of direction. Executive Board had revisited the Vision and Mission statements of the IMA, and Council ratified the changes they suggested. Since the Vision of the IMA is so important to the sense of who we are and what we do it is worth setting out the revised version here. The Vision of the IMA includes the following statement. *As the professional and learned society for mathematicians working in academia, commerce, education, government and industry, it will be:*

- A key organisation for advice on mathematical matters, for everyone from Government to the general public;
- The Institute that all those with an interest in mathematics will want to join;
- A driving force for society to appreciate the ubiquity, usefulness and enjoyment of mathematics.

It is easy to forget the bigger picture when arguing about detail, but the detail is only worthwhile if there is a greater vision behind it.

Early Career Mathematicians (ECMs) carry the future of the mathematical sciences and its applications on their shoulders and are essential to the vitality of organisations such as ours. Karrie Liu, a healthcare analytic consultant, was co-opted onto Council to help represent ECMs and the ECM Committee of the IMA. I know Karrie from the Advisory Board to the mathematics department at the University of York, and I'm sure she will bring a lot of relevant experience to Council. ECM participation will also be key to a new group, the Membership Development Scheme (Communications and Marketing) task force, created to engage with the marketing of our activities.

The remainder of the meeting was occupied by reports. Eight Certificates of Service in recognition of members' contributions to the Institute were approved. We learned about latest issues in the Council for Mathematical Sciences (looking for a new Chair following the appointment of the previous chair Sir Adrian Smith as head of the Alan Turing Institute), the Maths Teacher Training Scholarship Scheme we facilitate (single-handedly – well, almost – responsible for the presence of qualified mathematics teachers in many schools), engagement with schools, the status of our journals (good, but constantly under review), the Academic Representative Scheme, the Bond Review of Knowledge Exchange, REF/TEF/KEF (don't ask!), ACME, the Science Council, recruitment (an amazing 8300 eStudent members, outnumbering the standard members) et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. These are all important to the future of the IMA and the ways the IMA interacts with the broader mathematical community. Council treats them seriously, but they defy intelligent reporting.

There were two outbreaks of applause during the meeting. The first greeted Nira Chamberlain's re-appearance after he had absented himself for the short debate on the recommendation for the next President. The second was for the contribution Assistant Director John Meeson has made to the IMA. This was John's last Council meeting before retirement and Alistair Fitt outlined the varied tasks John has undertaken since his appointment in 2009. John has worked on almost every aspect of the IMA's operation.

Most recently he has overseen the new database and myIMA portal. The influential Mathematics Matters was another initiative he has led. He has made a massive contribution to the Institute and has never stopped enthusing others about mathematics and the applications of mathematics.

It is easy to forget the impact of individuals to organisations. John has been an important part of the team and helped to develop our activities. John will continue to contribute to some aspects of our work, but for the moment it is thank you and we will never forget the custard.

Paul Glendinning FIMA

IMA Councillor and University of Manchester

After Council

Stephen Metcalfe MP, who is Chairman of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, a member of the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee and Government Envoy for the Year of Engineering, attended the IMA Council dinner as Guest of Honour and after-dinner speaker. Stephen is a strong supporter of STEM, and sponsored the STEM for Britain competition which took place in Parliament on 12 March 2018 (see page 87). The IMA Council was appreciative of this opportunity to discuss a range of topics, important to mathematics and its applications, with Stephen.