

Minutes of the 18th Annual General Meeting
Thursday 17th March 2022 at 1300
Room SG10 (South Gallery 10) at Oceanology, Excel, London, UK



1. Attendance, Apologies for absence and Welcome

1.1 Attendance:

Individual Members:

Svetlana Kločková
Emma Donegan
Martin Webb
David Parker (Chief Exec., Director)
John Dillon-Leetch – (London Port Authority, Hon. Sec., Director)
Simon Squibb
Gordon Johnston
Trish Buxton (Chair, Director, Teledyne Geospatial)
Imran Eyre
Don Ventura
Iain Slade (Director)
Jamie McMichael-Phillips
Mike Postle Hacom
William Heaps (Marico Marine)
Dick New
Paul Hanna

Corporate Members:

A 2 Sea (Ross Taylor)
Sonardyne (Edward Moller)
Hydro Energy Group (Chris Girdlestone)
Atlant Professionals (Paul Hampton)

David Buxton (THS UK Ops. Mgr.).

1.2 Welcome

Trish Buxton, Chair of THS:UKI, welcomed everyone to the 2022 Annual General Meeting, thanked all for taking some time to join today – it is really good to see people!

1.3 Apologies for absence were received from:

John Pinder, Nigel Kelland, Marcus Street, Tony White, Randolph Choo She Nam, Ian Holden, Mike Sebbage, Paul Stern, Carol Stern, Paul Edge, Chris Burls, Dick Jan Bakker, Mike Trannah, Billy Johnson, Ian Russell, Rick Read, Mark Poole, Ed Denson, John Fraser, Simon Canning, Kevin Gaffney, Sean Cullen.

2. Consideration and acceptance of the Minutes of the 17th AGM held on 20th April 2021

The Minutes were accepted without amendment.

Proposed by: Gordon Johnston Seconded by: Iain Slade

3. Consideration and acceptance of the Report of the Management Committee and Financial Statement for the year ending 31st March 2021

Noted that the report was not yet available as the accountants have not yet finished finalizing the report and submission. They will be made available when complete.

4. Appointment of Auditors to audit the Society's accounts for the year ending 31st March 2022 and authorisation of the Board to fix their remuneration

The Board recommended that the current accountants, Simpkins Edwards LLP of Michael House, Castle Street, Exeter, EX4 3LQ should, once again, be appointed as the Society's auditors and financial advisers.

Question: William Heaps – when will the accounts be issued? David Parker added context that the accounts are finalizing the year ending 31st March 2021 at the moment, so they are not ready for this meeting.

Question: Paul Hanna – what are the membership levels like? David Buxton provided rough numbers (approx..50, approx.. 200+ individual – includes retired, student and graduate) and highlighted that the renewal period is about to commence.

Paul Hanna – proposed that the accountants can be asked to reduce fees.

Proposed by: William Heaps

Seconded by: Simon Squibb

5. Consideration of the Reports from:

Chief Executive – David Parker

Good afternoon everyone. I'm David Parker, Chief Executive of the Hydrographic Society UK & Ireland. It's been a very eventful year since the last AGM, so I will run through this activity, expressing both the positives and negatives that can be drawn from events.

First, the positives:

Renaming of the organisation to The Hydrographic Society UK & Ireland

At the last AGM, you agree unanimously to change our name from the Hydrographic Society UK to the Hydrographic Society UK & Ireland. This was effectively a simple correction, as we already had a footprint and Branch operating in the Island of Ireland. However, our Director for Ireland, Sean, has always struggled to get significant traction with the Society in Ireland, and we felt the name may have been a contributing factor. We effectively created a new brand name to include Ireland, and of course developed all new branding and a modernised logo. This was no small undertaking, as we had to change everything where our branding appears, including all of our merchandise and the web site (more to follow). The good news is that we are now seeing a noticeable change in Ireland, with an increased number of individuals involved and contributing, and Branch meetings taking place, and of course the Remote Hydrography Conference in Dublin. We wish Sean continued success in growing.

New Web Site

In the autumn we were finally able to launch a brand new web site, as our old one was at least 10 years out of date. I feel neither Dave or I were quite prepared for just how much work that would be, including the bidding process to find the best contractor for our needs. Overall, it took nearly a year of effort to get to the launch stage, and there is still more work to do to enable Branches to make full use of it. Traffic to the new site has been much higher than the previous one, and I hope you've all been able to review. If you have suggestions or content, please let us know. I'd particularly like to thank Dave for his great work on this.

The Hydrographic Professional Accreditation Scheme

This initiative has reached an important milestone by going live last October, and you are all now invited to apply for individual accredited status. There will be two application cycles each year, with deadlines at the end of March and September. Note that THS:UKI individual members receive a significant discount (more than the cost of membership), so ensure your membership is up-to-date before applying. We already have around 20 accredited individuals registered, with more to follow at the end of this month.

In December we submitted an application to the IBSC, who formally recognise such schemes and educational courses on behalf of the IHO and others. Iain Slade, Eric Langois and I will be presenting to the IBSC at the end of the month and answering their questions, so we are very hopeful to gain their recognition of HPAS.

I'd particularly like to thank Capt. Derek Rae, who until recently was UK Hydrographer of the Navy, and has been chairing the international HPAS Assessment Panel since the pilot was run early last year. Derek has now retired from the Navy and will be standing down as the panel chair after the next intake completes later in the spring. Derek has been instrumental in getting HPAS successfully off the ground, and we are very grateful for the considerable contribution he has made.

Although initially developed and then operated by THSUK, HPAS is very much an international endeavour with our IFHS partner hydrographic societies and an IFHS owned scheme. IFHS representatives have provided input and review throughout the development processes, and the scheme is hosted on the IFHS web site -also with new branding! Visit <https://hydrography.earth/hpas/> for more information and to apply.

The Remote Hydrography Conference and Exhibition

We have just completed a very successful Remote Hydrography Conference and Exhibition in Dublin, Ireland. You will be aware that this event has been several years in the making but has been postponed a number of times due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We were originally due to hold a smaller, two-day event at the National Oceanography Centre in Southampton. After twice postponing, we decided that to celebrate our change to The Hydrographic Society UK & Ireland, we would move to Cork City Hall in November 2021. However, this too had to be cancelled due to Covid, and our team then found the fantastic venue within Dublin Castle in February. In the weeks leading up to this date, we all witnessed the impact of the new Omicron variant, with more surges in infections around the world, and we feared the worst that we would again need to move. However, we held our nerve, and had the final go/no-go decision as late as the 1st February, only three weeks before the event was due to take place. At that point, delegate ticket sales had still not reached the point of break-even, but we were very close, and confident there would be a last-minute surge – which there was!

We clearly achieved our core objectives; we enabled promotion and discussion of the science of hydrography – including the increase of remote operations and remote sensing, we brought the seabed mapping community together, and we also eventually made a reasonable profit, which THS:UKI needs to cover our overheads. I would like to again thank the THS:UKI organising team for their hard work over the past two years to deliver this great event; Dave Buxton, Trish Buxton, Sean Cullen, Gordon Johnston, Mark Poole, Fergal McGrath, Gillian Mills & Simone Rapple.

Branch meetings Largely resumed in person.

Most of our fantastic Branch committees have been able to resume some in-person meetings, which is crucial to the future of our Society. When we've spoken to members who have left over the past two years, the consistent response focuses on having no need for membership when they can't meet their local network in person. This shows that although the international and national efforts are important, for many the activity at the local level is key. I encourage all Branches to maintain efforts to have regular local meetings.

Slow growth in membership since a sharp decline 2-3 years ago.

Since a very sharp drop in membership 2-3 years ago, we have been able to stabilise and are starting to see some steady growth. We are still not at a level of income from membership that is sustainable, but we are slowly moving in the right direction.

Future Strategy Developed

The final positive I'd like to mention is that your Board have developed and agreed a longer term strategy for the Society. This will help us focus and prioritise our efforts into four main themes: Hydrographic Excellence, Education and Continued Professional Development, Engagement and Sustainability. There is more work to do on this, but we are beginning to further develop this strategy into a plan.

So, now briefly to the negatives;

Struggling to produce soundings magazine

Although our available levels of resource is a contributor to this, the most significant issue is a lack of content from the community. Dave has formed an Editorial Board to help cast the net more widely and develop content, but what we really need are contemporary articles on new developments within our profession. I encourage you all to consider whether an activity you are currently involved in could be the source of an interesting article. This will help promote your organisation and yourself to the wider seabed mapping community.

Membership still too low to be sustainable.

We've never quite been able to cover our costs through membership alone and have relied on frequent events to generate profit to top up our reserves. However, membership dropped significantly from around 4 years ago, and only got worse at the start of the pandemic. Please try to encourage your colleagues and organisations to join their seabed mapping community if not already a member.

Finally, this will be my last report to an AGM your Chief Executive, and likely to be Dave's last in his role too. We both took on these roles as a temporary measure at the start of the pandemic when the Society was in a crisis.

Dave has been doing a great job, considering the spectrum of activity, but will now be seeking a role more in line with his profession. Thanks again to Dave for all of the good work he has done over the past two years. I continued in my full-time role (in compressed hours) at the UK Hydrographic Office. I'm now in a new role at the UKHO which is taking up all of my capacity, and it's time to bring some fresh energy and ideas into the role. I'm proud of the contribution I've made to stabilise and grow the Society, and will remain as a Director, but I now hope we can recruit someone into the role to further inject enthusiasm and energy. I will leave you with a top tip – don't try and organise a conference during a global pandemic!

Honorary Finance Director

Dave Buxton reported on finances as Rick Read had given apologies for the meeting.

It was reported that the Financial Statement for the year ending 31st March 2021 is not yet available for the meeting however we will report in the minutes the overview post AGM.

Membership renewals and Remote Hydrography is expected income in the next financial year report

Added following AGM: financial summary is as follows: The net deficit for the year was £47,418 (2020: £53,464 deficit). After subtracting this from the accumulated funds brought forward of £210,112 (£186,302 unrestricted funds and £23,810 restricted funds), there is a balance of reserves of £162,694 to carry forward within the Society. This consists of £139,915 unrestricted funds and £22,779 restricted funds.

The Board is aware that the Society is running at a loss at the moment and is monitoring the situation carefully to ensure the long-term viability of the Society.

The Regions

East Anglia – Trish Buxton, Regional Director

Overall since the last AGM, the East Anglia branch has had a quieter year. We had an online meeting with a really interesting talk on Bathymetric Lidar by Norwegian company Terratec in May 2021. This was followed by a social in December. Unfortunately, for the social there were only four of us (we were not sure if it was a badly picked date due Norwich playing at home or whether it was just the ever present covid issues to navigate!). In our meetup we were brainstorming about building awareness of hydrography in the young and looking at how we could achieve this, for example, creating presentations and collection of stories by members sharing a wider variety of career opportunities.

Last month we held our branch AGM which was kindly hosted at GeoAcoustics. We were treated to a tour of the facility plus a talk on ‘‘Real time filtering of phase-measuring bathymetric sonar data using AI’’ by Danny Websdale and Francisco Gutierrez.

With a new committee formed we hope we can plan some more meetings and will keep everyone notified as plans evolve.

Ireland - Seán Cullen, Chair (Read by Trish Buxton)

The Ireland Branch held a formal AGM on the 13 December 2021 to elect a new Committee. Sean Cullen returned as Chair/Director for the following year with a full committee elected with a Treasurer, Secretary, Inter Regional Liaison and 5 ordinary members – four of which represent commercial companies in Ireland both North and South. This is the first time that Ireland has formalised a full committee and it was agreed that the rebranding of the THS:UKI to include Ireland has given new impetus to the society in Ireland.

On January 28th the CEO of THS:UKI gave the Irish Branch an update on both the society and the HPAS situation. There is considerable interest in HPAS as it is a route to recognition for hydrography not otherwise available in Ireland directly. There have already been several expressions of interest in applying for the next round of HPAS and it is hoped that the experience of these first applicants can then feed information back to the Branch and establish the scheme as a cornerstone for building the society in Ireland.

The committee has committed to holding at least one society event per quarter and are keen to progress a collegiate approach to hydrography in Ireland as the industry begins to ramp up for the offshore renewable opportunities now available.

In February the Remote Hydrography conference then ran for three days at Dublin Castle and its success reflected well on the Irish members attending and networking with some of the top professionals in hydrography who supported this event. There were inevitable lessons to be learnt but the event was appreciated by all especially as it was the first gig post pandemic for many of us – well done to all for keeping the faith and making the journey worthwhile for all of us.

My apologies for not being able to attend this AGM in person especially as I cannot give the customary Irish Branch annual financial statement which is unchanged this year at ‘‘zero in – zero out’’ – but the hope is now that our new Treasurer will be able to submit a more comprehensive report to us next year.

Scotland – Simon Canning, Chair – no report from Scotland provided during the AGM

South West – Paul Byham, Chair (Read by David Parker)

Organising a program over the last year has proved frustrating. This time last year we had just managed to get talks back on stream, albeit virtually, with a talk from Iain Slade on IHO SP44 Ed 6 in April; and by David Parker on the IFHS HPAS scheme in May. Although Zoom meetings are not as fulfilling as meets in person they do mean that the talks can be recorded and added to the HydroSoc website for those not able to attend. In June we managed a hybrid meeting running the 6th SW Student Presentations at the Plymouth Marine Station with limited audience, a panel of judges and the students, with a panel judge and a wider virtual audience joining us online, a format that seemed to work successfully.

The summer recess proved frustrating as our usual venue decided not to open up again after the lock downs, leaving us struggling to find a venue to meet for our usual start of season talks in October, which had to be canceled. We managed to get talks up and running in November at the Plymouth Marine Station with a talk from Peter Holt and Mallory Haas of the SHIPS project on their '1000 tyres' cleanup project of Plymouth Sound. We ended the year with a visit to Valeport in Totnes in December at their new customer suite, and treated to a virtual tour of their site and a talk on MVP from Jim Gardner.

We were back to virtual meetings in January for the SW Branch AGM, with discussion of need for new venue and sponsorship required to be able to run the student presentations and talks after the summer. Fortunately our funds have been bolstered by the Hydro Soc education fund to help us award prizes for this year's event. Thank you.

As we have a large and active student cohort we were able to secure the Plymouth Marine Station again for our February and March events, a talk from Steve Keedwell on Seep Detection in February, and from Richard Doddeswell from Geoacoustics on unsupervised Real-time AI of PDBS data in March. This talk was delivered remotely to a live audience, fitting as I had poached the talk from the excellent Remote Hydrography conference I had attended the previous week in Dublin.

We have our 7th SW student presentations to look forward to on 30th March, followed by a visit to the UKHO in Taunton in April. We look to close the season on World Hydrography Day in June hosted by Swathe Services and Ultrabeam in Hayle. Fingers crossed things will be smoother for our next season. Paul Byham SW Branch Chair

Southern – Mark Poole, Chair (Read by Edd Moller)

The Southern Branch committee has appointed Mark Poole as Regional Director, Ken Collins as branch treasurer and Rory Findlay as branch secretary. The committee have organised and delivered our target of four annual events with meetings in July, November and December 2021 and February 2022. Of these three were virtual and one, the November event at the NOC, face to face, with the option for folk to join remotely. The December meeting was planned to be held face to face at Ocean Infinity's offices in Southampton but sadly had to be switched to a virtual format due to Covid at short notice. Our annual joint meeting with the RICS was also held remotely as RICS policy at the time did not permit the use of the lecture room in their Great George Street headquarters again, due to Covid. As only four people joined the November event remotely we concluded that, for now, the additional effort and constraints associated with live streaming of face to face events was not justified.

Despite these challenges our committee of 11 has been able to maintain delivery of high quality themed technical meetings for the benefit of members. Our 2023 program is being finalised and will include more opportunities to get out and about in with visits planned to the Rampion windfarm operations and maintenance base in Newhaven in April and the Solent University ship handling centre at Timsbury in June. We also plan to refresh our strategy for engaging with the three universities in the southern area that offer relevant first and masters degrees.

The committee meet monthly for a focused 30 minute call, and with two committee members taking the lead for organising each event, is sufficiently resourced to deliver our base target of four quality annual events. As ever, members based in the South who would like to play a more active role in society events are most welcome to join us and we welcome any suggestions for future technical meetings and branch events.

Education Committee

John Dillon-Leetch, Chairman

Little to report at the time. Re-engaging the committee and looking at encouraging people, especially students, into the industry. Successful participation from students during Remote Hydrography. This includes some great reports which will be seen in Soundings.

Ongoing with Alan Inham award.

Question: Gordon Johnston – are student awards open to non members? Yes

International Federation of Hydrographic Societies

Gordon Johnson

Gordon thanked John Fraser for all his work as the IFHS representative and for the handover.

Gordon highlighted that the main IFHS activities are ongoing HPAS and student award. Hydro22 will be 6-8th December in Monaco.

6. Confirmation of Regional Directors

Confirmation of the following individuals as Regional Directors to take effect from the conclusion of the AGM in accordance with Article 16.4:

East Anglia	Trisha Buxton
Ireland	Seán Cullen
North West	vacant
Scotland	Simon Canning
South West	David Parker
Southern	Mark Poole

7. Election of Honorary Secretary

Election of the Honorary Finance Director by the Members in accordance with Article 16.14 to take effect from the conclusion of the AGM.

Trish reported that no nominations had been received, Rick Read is willing to continue as Finance Director and is recommended for re-election by the Board.

This nomination was unanimously endorsed by the meeting which elected Rick to this post for a two-year term.

8. Election of the Student and New Graduate Director

Election of the Student and New Graduate Director by the Members in accordance with Article 16.18 to take effect from the conclusion of the AGM.

Trish reported that no nominations had been received, Svetlana Kločkova is recommended for re-election by the Board.

This nomination was unanimously endorsed by the meeting which elected Svetlana to this post for a one year term.

9. Election of TWO Elected Directors

Election of TWO Elected Directors by the Members in accordance with Article 16.9 to take effect from the conclusion of the AGM.

Nominations have been received for Kevin Gaffney and Gordon Johnston

Each nomination was unanimously endorsed by the meeting which elected Kevin and Gordon to this post for a two-year term.

10. Address by the Chair of THS UK

David has already covered a lot so I will not repeat. As you will have heard from David, we have had a very busy and positive year. I was fortunate enough to be at Remote Hydrography and cannot express how proud I am of the event and all the hard work by many making it a huge success. In addition, the new website, delivery of HPAS and more.

Thank you to everyone for their continued support and commitment and we look forward to the year ahead. Thank you all for also coming today!

11. Open Discussion on topics raised by members

Dick New – asked about the CEO and Ops Manager Roles as David reported that this would be the last AGM. Trish Buxton explained that they were preparing for a recruitment process. CEO role will be advertised first and then we will look at the Ops Manager Role when we have dates from Dave.

William Heaps - mentioned 50th Anniversary of THS UK and that he was looking into possible plans to celebrate. Possible to have event in London, maybe regional.

Gordon Johnson – were there any nominations for fellowship? No received.

12. Any other business

None.

Meeting Closed at 1430

Group Photo taken at 2022 AGM

