



IHBC Branch membership newsletter January 2014

This is the latest in an occasional series of newsletters to branch membership secretaries dealing with matters which may be of use to you and to branches generally. Some parts are very similar to what has been sent out before; some are new. The first two sections are not substantially different.

1. The membership process

- (i) When applications are received, Fiona Newton does an initial validation to see whether they are adequate enough to be sent out for assessment. On occasions there just isn't enough information or key parts are missing which means that – irrespective of the quality of the testimonial – it would not make sense to send them out to the branches/assessors.
- (ii) After this initial validation, they are sent out to branch membership secretaries, with a deadline for comments.
- (iii) They are then sent, hopefully with branch comments, to the assessors, who review them by a deadline – generally c. 3 weeks before Council. Each candidate normally has four assessors. They return their assessments to me with a view on their suitability to be full members.
- (iv) The final recommendations for full membership are in the name of the Membership Committee which has sight of the recommendations before they go to Council, where the formal decision is taken. It is difficult to think of any reason why Council would disagree with the recommendations, but that option remains open.

2. Branch assessment.

The assessors have a 'gold standard' which should guide them and how they respond. From my point of view, the more information they can give the better, especially where the candidate may be marginal.

I've attached this guidance note for information, but you might like to use it as well if it helps structure any comments about the candidate. But essentially there are no rules about how you, as the branch membership secretary, should respond: it is entirely up to you. You may ask for comments from the branch executive committee which you then collate; or it may be your own assessment based on the application. This could be in the form of a few lines or a more thorough general review of the application.

It may be that you know the candidate and can therefore help validate what they say about their work; but equally your comments on an unknown candidate are also very useful. The branch's views can be critical in some cases – so please get them to us by the suggested deadline, if at all possible, so they can be taken into account by the assessors and then by me and the committee.

3. Full members, associates and affiliates: a new approach

As many people have become aware, we are getting many new affiliate members (good) but relatively few full members (not so good). This has meant that the 'affiliate class' has two quite separate components: those who have been an affiliate for a long period of time and may be skilled in some parts of the core competences but not necessarily all; and those who are more 'probationers' in their early years as conservation practitioners – the original intention of the affiliate class.

In a major change for the Institute, we are addressing this problem by adopting a 'stepping stones' approach to full membership: recognising those who meet the professional and at least one of the core competences as 'associates' in a grade which is between that of affiliates and full members. All these points were set out in a paper which went to Council and was approved last December. They have been admirably summarised in a Newsblog which went out at Christmas. Just in case you upped the level of your spam filter/switched off over Christmas and therefore missed it, I hope you won't mind if it is appended below!

2014 is likely to be a busy and important year for the Institute. We wish you and your branch all the best in the coming year.

Paul Butler and the Membership Committee.

January 2014

More help will soon be on offer to applicants seeking to become accredited as Full Members of The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC), as the institute will soon introduce an intermediate membership stage to add more clarity to the application process and offer more structured support for the career progress of future conservation professionals.

The IHBC will soon offer accreditation in a single specialist area of conservation, to serve as an optional prelude to the demonstration of multi-disciplinary skills that every conservation professional must achieve to become accredited as a Full Member of the IHBC, as current practice requires and as international standards demand.

IHBC President Trefor Thorpe said: 'I'm delighted to see the IHBC play such a proactive role in developing structured support for conservation practitioners, helping them secure credentials that are increasingly important in the current jobs market. The introduction of a staged progress to full accreditation means that those many people who appreciate the value of the IHBC's member benefits and quality assurance can now more easily see a clear route from skills development to professional recognition. What a Christmas bonus this is for our members, current and future!'

IHBC Chair Mike Brown said: 'The introduction of a more structured route to accreditation through the IHBC marks a step-change in how we can advise and guide our members as they develop their skills and, of course, their careers. We know that as a professional body we can no longer rely on the generosity of hard-pressed local authority planning departments to host the training of so many of our members, and we must now do all we can to replace that capacity.'

'Adding clarity to the route to full IHBC membership is just one of a number of related initiatives now under way. From improving support for our volunteer network of Branches, as they continue their critical role in recruiting and guiding prospective applicants, to providing dedicated training events for everyone from the interested student to the specialised professional, we're doing all we can to help guide practitioners to IHBC membership and accreditation, the gold-standard in built and historic environment conservation.

IHBC Vice Chair Emilia Hands said: 'Our new membership support strategy has been developed as part of the institute's response to sector challenges that crystallised at

our 2013 AGM in Carlisle, with a motion coming from the IHBC's Past Chair, Jo Evans, calling for more support for future members. Through Jo, our members asked their institute to offer more support and guidance for those developing their conservation skills. Our first major response is to agree this intermediate stage in the IHBC's accreditation process, as applicants will have the option to address the challenge of demonstrating multi-disciplinary conservation skills sets by taking one discipline at a time!

IHBC Membership Secretary Paul Butler said: 'These developments in our membership support mark a critical moment in the development of our much-lauded membership assessment processes, but we must also be sure that we have all the detail worked out before we launch the route formally.'

'We'll address the fine detail in the coming weeks and months, but in the interim if you are thinking of applying for membership, please do download our application form from our website and, in line with the guidance provided there, do just start filling it out. That form remains central to the application process. It ensures that our membership standards remain unchallenged, rooted as they are both in the international models that have shaped the standards, and the demand for practical conservation outcomes that inspired them'.