

Q&As

Annual General Meeting

17 September 2020

By Zoom

The Annual General Meeting was held online as a webinar event for the first time in 2020 because of social distancing restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This enabled more members to attend than usual, which meant that there were more questions than usual. For this reason, it was agreed that a Q&A document would be produced to cover issues raised.

This is in addition to the formal minutes of the meeting.

COVID-19 / Policy

- 1. What has the Institute done to engage those who have left the profession to assist with the pandemic?**
- 2. In light of the 'Boris EHO list', can the CIEH carry out some kind of formal review in to how the profession can keep a handle on all the Environmental Health Officers in the country - those with Diplomas, Degrees and Masters and those that have passed the professional competency requirements. It will help with scenarios like COVID-19, help in preventing EHO fraud and also with trying to engage with all environmental health people going forward.**

This has been one of the main drivers behind our proposal for an environmental health register, which has recently been recognised by Government. The intention is to have a list of skills and experience of members and professionals that authorities can draw upon as additional resource to support COVID-19 response and EU transition. CIEH will play an active part in ensuring those on the list are professionally competent.

As part of the project we will be actively encouraging people who have left the profession to consider opportunities that COVID-19 has created in raising the profile of environmental health and in addressing the shortage of professionals. It is encouraging after so many years of cuts, that the environmental health workforce is being recognised

for the flexible and professional resource it provides.

3. **I am anxious that the CIEH should take a more high-profile position throughout the remaining period of COVID-19. Please can you give the meeting that assurance?**
4. **We must raise our profile and get back on the top table. I believe Environmental Health Practitioners have a vital part to play in protecting and improving public health. Gary McFarlane and Kate Thompson do a great job in Northern Ireland and Wales, but we have no Environmental Health Practitioner representing England. Will this be addressed in the future?**

We absolutely agree about raising our profile and being seen to be at the top table. The work the policy team across the nations has done over COVID-19 has demonstrated how we must connect up our resources. For the last six months our directors for Wales and Northern Ireland have been working corporately to support the professions across the UK, alongside our policy team and policy panels which are drawn up from environmental health professionals across the UK.

This approach has had a positive impact on our work clearly demonstrated by the metrics of content and member engagement. We intend to continue with this approach and ensure we have a single policy team supporting our members across the UK whilst ensuring effective relationship management with the devolved administrations and members.

5. **As a full time (working well over the usual hours) Local Authority officer I have not signed up to the Coronavirus Register of EHOs. Should I have done, or would I automatically have been accounted for? Is the register for those who are not in my position or for those with spare time?**

The register is for those with spare capacity, which we appreciate is far from the case for many practitioners.

Membership

6. **In 2018 CIEH restructured the network of regions and its volunteers. Some regions and branches are now moribund. Income from regions is significantly down from last year. Expenditure is also down, suggesting less services to members. Would the CIEH agree this restructure has been unsuccessful and what plans had it to reinvigorate region and branch activity?**

We restructured the network as part of a wider rebalancing of CIEH. One of the drivers for this is that we were no longer able to sustain the funding of the network and our arrangements for paying people in the network may well have got us into trouble with the tax man.

Enthusiasm in the network has always been uneven, but it is fair to say that there were some teething troubles with the new arrangements. Despite this our aim was for each Hub to organise at least two low cost events in 2020 (with greater or lesser assistance from CIEH centrally as needed). But then COVID-19 happened.

We are now in the process of evaluating the network, learning from the experience of the engagement with members during the pandemic. Engagement over the past six months with members across the country has demonstrated that geography isn't the only determinant for network activity. Members are keen to join up and network around topics, sectors and careers. In addition to supporting regional networks where members want to participate, we will be enhancing networking opportunities in other areas too (e.g. Port health, academics, employers, students).

7. The annual report states 831 new members yet only £5k increase in membership subscription income. Does this mean we lost 750 members in the same year? What is the demographic of this lost membership?

2018 and 2019 were both quite exciting years for membership data. We:

- introduced a new CRM,
- broadened access to membership
- launched rolling renewals rather than a fixed renewal date of 1st of January
- ensured that subscription discount was for payment by direct debit only

The new CRM allowed us to scrutinise our data and showed in early 2019 that we had several hundred “junk” records for people who were no longer in membership.

The changes to the membership grades and the shift to rolling renewals meant that membership has become a lot more turbulent - people join and leave at any point in the year and some people from non-traditional backgrounds try out membership and find that it doesn't suit them.

Rolling renewals and the emphasis on direct debit mean that people are far more likely to sign up for monthly payments, so someone who joined late in 2019 would have only paid a fraction of their membership in that year.

Members may also recall that they were required to sign up for a new MyCIEH account (for the new CRM and GDPR opt ins) in 2018. Some 500 members did not do this and so had difficulty renewing.

In fact, roughly 900 members were lapsed for non-payment in early 2019 for a combination of reasons including the usual attrition (left the profession, retired), problems logging in, had tried membership out and didn't like it, etc. Many of the members we lapsed rejoined later in the year and form part of the “new” members listed in the annual report.

Affiliates are over-represented in the list of lapsed members, being 42% of the list of lapsed members, but only 17% of our membership. Generally, our members in the higher grades are extremely loyal and retention at those levels is circa 90%.

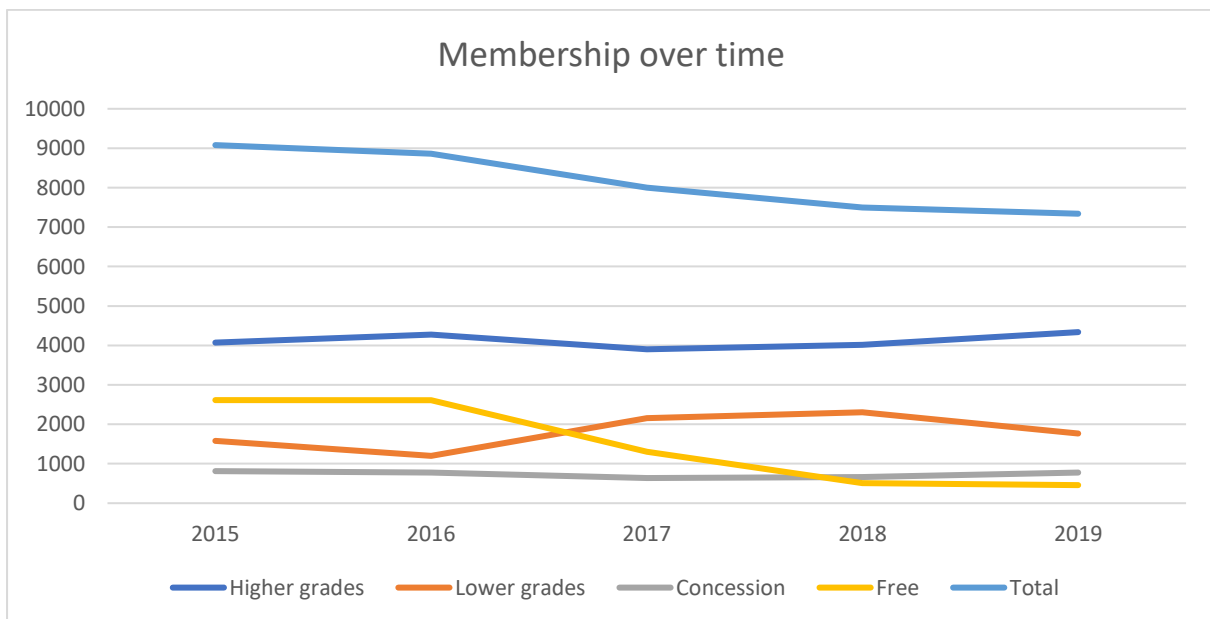
8. Will there be any relaxation on CPD for 2020 due to the constraints and availability of courses?

Yes. We would encourage members to participate in any training that is available to them (for example webinars) but recognise that there are a variety of reasons why CPD is harder to achieve during the pandemic. Our position is fully explained [here](#).

9. What is the current membership level and how many retired members?

10. I am unable to find the actual total numbers of CIEH members in the reports. How many current members are there and over the last 5 years how does this compare? A trend line would be useful showing type of membership.

There are currently slightly 7262 members. Of these 379 are in free retired membership (e.g. 50/60/70 Year members) and 513 are in paid retired membership.



The data for this is not straightforward as we have amended the grade structure and changed our database software significantly during this period.

- “Higher grades” are Member and Fellow (including Chartered).
- “Lower grades” are Associate and Affiliate (and their previous equivalents).
- “NW/Retired” are paying members in all grades at the concessionary rate for retired, non-working and maternity.

- “Free” includes the former student member grade as well as Honorary etc members.

Overall, there has been a decrease in free memberships and an increase in paying members. The lower grades are fairly volatile in terms of retention. There has been an increase in the higher grades.

11. Will there be a grace of months before subscription renewal is requested?

The Board will consider the 2021 subscription rate shortly, but there is no proposal at present for a grace period. Members who are financially challenged are invited to sign up for monthly payment at the discounted direct debit rate.

12. I'd like to give a big shout out to everyone that has contributed to this year's programme of Professional Interviews and Portfolio assessments.

Thank you for raising this. Our assessors have pulled out all the stops this year in very difficult circumstances to help large number of people complete both the old EHRB pathway and the new Chartered Programme as well as our food technical qualifications. There have been several challenges with capacity and also moving most of our assessments into an online environment during the pandemic. This thanks will be conveyed to our volunteers, without whom we would not have the new generations of practitioners that are the lifeblood of the profession.

Finances

13. Why not make further savings to the CIEH's accounts, have better connectivity with members across the UK and move the HQ out of London?

Our strategic review will consider how to get optimal use of all our resources, in order to maximise return on investment.

14. Has the CIEH applied for and received financial support from the government or any other source to tackle the impact of COVID 19?

We accessed financial assistance through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) due to downturn in customer facing revenue streams

15. What is the purpose of making transfers of the value of the long leases to the Investment Funds? Doesn't this device give a false impression of the overall financial status of the organisation?

We prepare our accounts in accordance with the financial reporting framework and applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting

Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In 2019, we leased three floors (60%) of our building to commercial tenants and are earning rental income from this activity, therefore this element of the building is held as investment property with the remaining 40% being kept for our own use. The accounting treatment for the building therefore needed to be changed so that we could accurately reflect the mixed used nature in compliance with paragraph 16.4 of FRS 102.