



## **IHBC Branch membership newsletter September 2012**

I have been the membership secretary for about a year now and I thought it might be useful to bring together various points which might be useful for branch membership secretaries, and perhaps others as well.

### **1. The membership process**

- 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.
- After this initial validation, they are sent out to branch membership secretaries, with a deadline for comments.
- 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.
- The final recommendations 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.**

It is not intended that the branch membership secretaries act as a fifth assessor. There are no rules about how to 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 come in the form of a few lines or a more thorough general review of the application – it is up to you and the specific circumstances of the application. But it is very useful having this view which can be critical in some cases – so please try to get them to us by the suggested deadline, if at all possible, so they can be taken into account by the assessors.

## **3. Mentoring.**

Council has decided that it does not want to institute a formal mentoring process. Fundamentally, it puts too much pressure on the mentor without this being of completely clear advantage to the mentee (apologies for the neologism!). Our view is that there is enough information in the guidance for candidates to ensure that, if they read it carefully, they will know what they have to do and where their application may be strong or weak. If they are unsuccessful, they get a reasonably full feedback on their application which can guide them in any future submission.

This does not exclude however any informal mentoring which may take place, via friends/colleagues that the applicant may know.

## **4. Members and affiliates**

The purpose of being an affiliate is to act as “first step to full membership”. Many affiliates have been such for some time. If they are working mostly or partly in conservation, they are probably eligible to be full members. It is of course a major step for affiliates and they may understandably have concerns about whether they meet the core competences.

One way to help might be for branches to hold a seminar about full membership for affiliates. A couple of branches have done this and it has proved very useful. It may be possible to get an assessor to help out at a meeting; or it could be handled by the branch membership secretary. It would also act as a way of publicising the new forms which – the consensus seems to be – are much more helpful in letting applicants know what is needed.

Or you may have your own ideas about getting affiliates to become members. If so, obviously please go ahead and if it works, let us know – thanks.

### **Postscript**

Finally, a word of thanks to all the branch membership secretaries. The IHBC is an odd organisation in that it depends so heavily on the voluntary input of a range of busy professionals across the country. There are many key people and sections; but at the core of it is an understanding of what it takes to be a member and ensuring that the bar is high but not impossible for those with an interest (dare I say passion?) for conservation, married to a skill set that equips them to deal with all the problems and opportunities that working in this sector involves. So many thanks for your active participation in this critical process.

**Paul Butler and the Membership Committee.**

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