

20 April 2020

LIW AGM: Branch Rep Report

I agreed to continue in the role of Branch Representative for LIW for 2020-21, as our previously elected Rep, Ray Edwards, was unable to continue in the role. This has been a busy year for LI and an unusual year for us all, with COVID-19, and all meetings were held online. Due to responding to the COVID emergency, the LI AGM was postponed to February 2021 and the Jellicoe Lecture was held as a standalone (online) event.

For the benefit of future Branch Reps, a pre-meeting is usually held with Branch Reps a few weeks in advance of the Advisory Council meeting. In 2020-21 all meetings were held either by Zoom or WebEx. Documents for these meetings are shared on the Institute's Sharepoint in advance of the meeting¹.

Also helpful in supporting this role is a WhatsApp Group for Advisory Council members, where conversations outside the formal meetings can take place.

Branch Reps Briefing, June 2020

(held by WebEx)

This was a meeting that is held every year with Branch Reps to induct them into "all things LI" and equip Reps to take a pro-active role on Advisory Council, but representing their Branch area and as part of the governance of the Institute. I have attended previous meetings but was unable to attend this one due to a mix-up of email addresses after my retirement from WYG.

July meeting of Advisory Council (AdCo)

(held by WebEx)

This was held in two parts, 2nd & 31st July, because the LI was undertaking a "governance review" & it was felt the governance review should be considered separately from the ordinary business of AdCo.

1st meeting:

- Induction for AdCO – held every July meeting as the first of the Institute's year, introducing the governance structure and responsibilities of AdCo members, regardless of whether national or branch reps. It was emphasised that we are not allowed to speak individually on behalf of LI Council or Branch to the media but must refer back to LI.
- Handover to Jane Findlay as the new President; business performance report, end of year financial review, plans for future (2020-2023), update on Entry Standards project, and Report of the Board activities;
- Discussion of digital capabilities: LI Campus for CPD, Journal moving online, P2C exams to move online;
- COVID-19 effects: reduced number of associates and students from abroad & revenue to LI is reducing. Post-COVID group: concern that planners and architects are claiming the open space agenda for re-designing the public realm;
- Session on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion: "EDI": a panel of 6 speakers with a range of experiences and expertise, including a presentation on how parks and community spaces are not designed with ethnic minorities in mind. The EDI group is to be restarted;
- Presentation on a "Green Recovery for Landscape", post COVID-19 and what the LI's policies should be.

2nd meeting, focused on the Governance Review proposals:

- Because the LI is a charity it must be run by a Board of Trustees.
- The Advisory Council is the forum for discussion and recommendations are made to the Board Trustees. It is the Board that makes the decisions.
- Currently there are 3 Standing Committees plus Working Groups. The LI Staff are tasked with implementing the decisions of the Board.

¹ It's a good idea to download the docs, as the Sharepoint link expires after a time.

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- The aim of the Review is to streamline Governance bodies and processes with more clarity about the roles of each part of the LI and to make it more engaging for Members.
- Consultation with Members was to be in Spring 2021, and the finalised proposal to be put to LI AGM in 2021, but this was superseded by events later in the year.

A group of dissatisfied, many senior Institute members, engaged directly with AdCo members, putting forward alternative views, some expressed forcibly, which raised concerns across AdCo and the Board. A new Honorary Secretary was also appointed in September. As a consequence, the governance review was suspended, and after a short meeting in October, LI proposed setting up working groups to address different aspects of the governance review.

November meeting of Advisory Council

(held by Zoom)

There was a pre-meeting with Branch Reps a couple of weeks before (on Zoom) with topic discussions using break-out 'rooms' led by different LI staff members.

This meeting took place over 2 days and is the annual Joint Board/ AdCo Strategy and Planning meeting:

- 1st day focused on Governance matters, with President's Report, Q2 Performance Report, break-out groups to discuss impacts of COVID, introductions to new staff-team members (6 in all);
 - There was report-back on the just-commenced Independent Review (see below) & interaction with governance review.
- 2nd day focussed on issues of Equality Diversity Inclusion, Policy & Insight Update on Climate and Biodiversity Action & Green Recovery, and "Blue sky thinking to inform next LI business plan".
 - There was an EDI workshop with presentations and breakout discussions, with particular focus on racism: setting benchmarks against which to measure where we are now and future progress, how to attract people by removing barriers to entry and progression, supporting, championing, and "amplifying voices", and other aspects of the topic to help the Institute progress to a more diverse organisation & membership.
 - The afternoon session focussed on discussions and workshops to inform next LI business plan, based on current LI Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023, seeking more detailed ideas for 2021/22.

February meeting of Advisory Council

(held by Zoom)

This meeting had the theme of "Standards (Entry & Technical) & Policy"; discussed the details of the upcoming LI elections and report-back from the Member Survey; business performance report, the events calendar for the coming year, and priorities for 2021-22:

- LI continues to perform well financially, despite COVID, and Independent Review recommendations may require re-prioritisation of some business plan objectives;
- Digital delivery of Events, P2C, Awards, etc has seen increased delegate attendance and outreach; costs and carbon footprint (*note: I'm not sure how this was calculated!*) in running events dramatically reduced but contribution to LI wider budget significantly increased; P2C exams to move to 3no. in 2022, online;
- Policy priorities include:
 - Further delivering on our policy commitments made under the Climate and Biodiversity Action Plan;
 - Further delivering on other commitments in the Corporate Strategy, including engagement at COP26 in Glasgow by promoting the benefits of nature-based solutions to climate change and urban green infrastructure to climate adaptation, supporting practitioners in measuring the impacts of their work, pursuing partnerships that can support tools for measurement of embodied carbon and natural capital;

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- Continuing to deliver a high quality service while delivering the recommendation of the 2021 Independent Review and further delivering the reforms from the 2020-21 policy workplan.
- Priorities identified by Parks and Green Space Network, EDI issues in relation to parks & open spaces, natural capital investment, etc;
- External priorities in addition to climate change comprise a long list that includes Green Infrastructure and SuDS, environmental regulation and natural capital, rural and land use management, planning and development regulation, design and placemaking, business, skills, and Brexit.

Independent Review

In October, the President established an “Independent Review”, appointing an independent consultant to lead it, to identify the cause of disagreements and complaints relating to aspects of governance and the LI’s internal operations and their resulting impacts, and to make recommendations for a positive and productive way forward. I was invited to be a member of the President’s Panel, which acted as project manager for the Review. The Final Report was presented to the Board on 4th February and reported to AdCo at its February 2021 meeting. It sets out a range of recommendations under 5 key headings, which a new “Programme Board” will oversee and plan actions and timelines for implementation. The Report and the Board’s initial response can be seen here: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/member-content/li-independent-review/> (you will need to login to MyLI).

... and finally,

I have enjoyed representing the Wales Branch on Advisory Council but will be standing down from this AGM, and wish my successor equal enjoyment and a rich experience in the governance of the Landscape Institute!

Mary O’Connor FLI

Branch Rep, 2019-21