

MAKE YOUR GOVERNANCE VOTE COUNT

Thank you to our ICE President Paul Sheffield for explaining the new ICE Council and Trustee Board arrangements proposed by past president David Orr's committee to be voted on shortly by members (*NCE, last month*).

Thank you too to past president Paul Jowitt and others who organised the Special General Meeting which successfully argued for a re-think of the earlier arrangements, which seemed to many of us to have been hastily put forward for reasons other than the prosaic business ones now explained by Sheffield. It was particularly crass to have landed this crisis on us when we were celebrating the 200th anniversary of the founding of the ICE, under the distinguished leadership of Lord Mair as President.

The new arrangements include some puzzles: why are non-members allowed to speak at Special General Meetings and why are not all ballots electronic? Also, it would be helpful to transparency to have a non-binding members' opinion-poll ballot on the members of the Trustee Board, some of whom will be future presidents, put forward by the Nominations Committee.

Finally, I would like to propose that President Paul Sheffield be invited to spend another year in office, to make up in part for the interruptions of Covid-19, but more because he is a great civil engineer, with a distinguished career of achievement in the practice and the business of being a contractor in civil engineering and public works. He is an inspiration to all, young and old alike, and would be the ideal leader to take us into a post-Covid era of infrastructure engineered to sustain humanity and the environment through the impacts of climate change.
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ICE President Paul Sheffield gave a very open account in June's issue of *NCE* of the background and reasons for the upcoming membership ballot on the ICE's governance that opened on 1 June. The governance ballot comes only two years after the last one.

This time, they've got the process right. And I'll be

supporting the changes.

It's very different to 2018, when the ICE balloted its members to seek approval to transfer governance of the ICE from a Council elected by the membership at large to an Executive Council/Trustee Board appointed from within. There had been no consultation or discussion with the wider membership prior to the ballot.

This failure of process prompted some ICE members, myself included, to call for a Special General Meeting (SGM). We also set up an open access website – www.CivilsMatters.org – to enable free discussion and to call for a return of direct democratic accountability of ICE's governance to its members.

The numbers required to call an SGM were easily met from across the ICE's UK and international membership. The timings were such that the 2018 ballot had to go ahead as scheduled. The ballot turnout was disappointingly low – 9% – and support for the proposed changes only exceeded the threshold by a few votes.

The SGM called for the ICE Council to undertake extensive and effective consultation on ICE's governance with the membership at large, formulate new proposals for ICE governance and then hold a fresh ballot of the membership on those proposals.

Following the SGM, the ICE Council established a Presidential Commission to undertake a Governance Review, chaired by Past President David Orr. They have done an excellent job.

In contrast to 2018, the whole process has been open. A breath of fresh air.

The ICE is a membership organisation. It belongs to the members, not to the hierarchy, not to the bureaucracy and administration. Of course, that brings responsibility. Responsibility for the ICE to communicate much better with its members. And a responsibility for the members to be involved and engaged. Use it or lose it.

I'll be supporting a return to ICE governance through accountability to the members. I hope others will do so too. But one way or the other, vote!

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