AGM 2023 – Member Questions & LI Responses

Member questions in advance of AGM

7 members contacted us in advance of the meeting

#	MEMBER QUESTIONS	*RESPONSE*
1	What steps the LI have or will take to respond to the UK government's proposal to raise the minimum salary for overseas workers to obtain a work visa to £38,700? The profession is already facing a skills and recruitment crisis and this raise, if it comes into force, will put employing recent graduates or recently chartered landscape architects from outside the UK beyond the means of most offices	*This is a live issue that is still evolving and Government has already amended its stance. We are monitoring the situation and will continue to consider the matter and its potential impact on LI members. This may include research to gain feedback from our members and practices regarding direct impacts on the profession*
2	Can membership have an update on LI TGN06/19 Visualisation and what has become of Technical Committee	*As requested authors names have been removed name from the TGN 06/19 and the acknowledgement now reads: "It was prepared on behalf of the LI by a working group reporting to the Technical Committee."* *TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of development proposals.* *Further to this, it has also been agreed that TGN 06/19 will be the subject of a review and a note to that effect has been added to the Visualisation page of the website, as well as the TGN itself. The review of TGN 06/19 will not take place before the review of the policy and technical guidance process has been completed and any recommendations implemented.* *The Board took the decision to stand down the Technical & Research Committee while the review of the standing committees is carried out. This is because disagreements amongst the Committee and complaints the Board had received about behaviour by individuals on the Committee, non-compliance with terms of office and a number of recent appointments being outside of the process. Arrangements have been put in place for important ongoing technical work to continue.*
3	Annual accounts for y/e March 2023: In the analysis of expenditure there are 'Information costs' of £175K and 'Other costs' of £266K. Will members be provided more detail on these two costs, the first of which did not appear in 2022 and the second of which was significantly	1) *Information Costs totals £175k, includes IT development costs (£63k), IT licences (£21k), IT running software (£64k), website support (£19k), broadband/ phone (£10k). This was discussed with the auditors and felt that adding in this new category to Note 4a, gave the figures more depth, since they did not easily fit into other categories.*

	lower, particularly since the Institute's expenditure exceeded its income by nearly 310K.	2) *Other costs total £262k, includes 3ʳᵈ Party Platform fees (£25k), Irrecoverable VAT (£198k), balance sheet/ reconciliation/ debt write-offs from prior years (£39k).* *It is higher than the prior year (£115k) due to a significantly higher irrecoverable VAT (incr. of £105k) and balance sheet write offs relating to prior years (£39k).* *The VAT was higher, primarily due to a lower HMRC recovery rate (due to change in mix between trading and non-trading income), an adjustment to the prior year VAT figure, and an increase in support costs that incur irrecoverable VAT.* *The balance sheet write-offs were to ensure a clean balance sheet. These adjustments related to prior years and were not now recoverable, such as deferred membership income, some bad debts and debit balances on the purchase ledger. These balances were below auditor materiality and were therefore mainly unadjusted differences from prior years.*
4	A new CRM was installed in 2019. What did it cost to install the new system in 2019? Is there a proposal to replace that system as part of Project Kestrel and if yes, what is the cost estimate?	*The project updates would have been included in the Annual Reports at that time and we will interrogate records but unfortunately cannot report that data at this time* *Having reviewed our digital infrastructure the key findings were fed into Project Kestrel and Board have agreed to the LI procuring a replacement CRM as part of the project* *The LI is a future-orientated organisation, striving towards agility, innovation, and responsiveness, to help members and communities deliver more sustainable methods for living and working. In order to support our members in this work, it is essential that we have a functional, modern digital ecosystem, which is in line with the professional standards of today, and adds value to the LI experience for all.* *Our current systems are showing their age, falling short of being fit for purpose. As a service-led organisation, adapting to these changes by investing in appropriate digital infrastructure is paramount.* *Our new digital home will provide a seamless customer experience, offering simple, accessible member self-service and effective communications and engagement, unlocking value for members, staff and other stakeholders.* *Project Kestrel will enhance our services by integrating our digital operations into one ecosystem, with key aspects including:*

		• *Member services such as accreditation, technical guidance, and CPD*
		• *Member self-services such as renewals, booking events, and CPD management*
		• *Member portal*
		• *Website*
		• *Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and case management*
		• *Content Management System (CMS)*
5	We employ a Landscape Technician Apprentice. Our apprentice was due to begin the college part of the Apprenticeship, led by Capel Manor College, in September 2022. The Course did not start until April 2023 and since then there have been a number of delays, staff changes and a lack of communication from the college with students and employers. Is the Institute aware of the failures with this course and what steps are in place to ensure our Apprentice, and others, are getting the training and support they are due?	*We are aware of the issues at Capel Manor College and unfortunately they have struggled to attract and retain teaching staff for the course. The LI has assisted as much as it could in this regard having initially advertised the role of tutor for them free of charge on our Jobs Board as well as facilitating one of our members working for them over the summer last year which was always a temporary measure. Unfortunately, there seems to be little interest in the role and feedback received from another College who had showed initial interest in the apprenticeship suggested that they felt they could not attract and afford to pay what would be needed to employ someone to deliver the content some of which they felt was quite technical.* *We continue to work with the College to find a solution and are also working with the affected employers to ensure they are kept updated.*
6	I'd like to query why members, upon passing their Chartership exam are being asked to pay an extra £20 for a hard copy of their membership certificate? This honestly feels like a kick in the teeth. What kind of welcome is this to the LI, who should be supporting and encouraging membership? I'd like to add that this follows £240 annual Associate Membership fees, £225 registration for the Pathway, £105 annual retention fee to stay on the Pathway and £391 examination fee. Bearing in mind most examinations are online now, all examiners, mentors and supervisors are volunteers, and the pathway syllabus and supporting information is completely out of date. With nothing but one blanket email a year from the LI to candidates on the pathway, the LI now asks candidates to fork out another £438 for an LI run webinar that provides an "Overview of P2C". Can the LI please justify what these funds are being spent on and for the LI to	*Our membership fees, which include all our Pathway and Entry standards route to membership fees, are reviewed and agreed annually by our Finance & Risk Committee, and then approved by the Board of Trustees. Both the Committee and Board have oversight of the overall operational and volunteer costs and come to a decision for the good of the LI's future. The money we receive goes back into running the very complex operation for these processes, including some modest renumeration to a cohort of our volunteers who are involved in the process. Sadly, our online facilitation also runs with costs which are different from our face to face costs, but still invoke cost to the LI.* *We completely appreciate that our P2C programme is much in need of an update. This is why the Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership team are committed to our new operational infrastructure programme which is underway, known as Project Kestrel, which will result in a much better membership experience for*

take a very close look at itself and why it was founded. Was it not to encourage more people into the profession? Is education not one of the core functions of the LI?

When passing the exam, you have to send an email to ask for the certificate of membership (why is this not done automatically?) and then get a pdf certificate emailed and a message that you have to pay for a paper copy. This is sending a message to new members that the LI really couldn't careless about it's recent CMLIs. So why should we care about the LI?

I honestly feel that the £20 fee for a hard copy of the membership certificate should be scrapped as a sign of goodwill and anyone that's paid for the paper copy should be refunded! I mean, what exactly was the examination fee for? Especially if you did it online.

Can the LI review what it charges candidates on P2C? Where is the value for money considering in most cases this is paid for by the candidate, not their employer.

In addition to this, can the LI improve communication with candidates? We're all in the dark with no up to date information from the institute. I mean, what exactly are the plans for phasing out the old syllabus? What's the time line? May I suggest quarterly updates and updated FAQs and supporting information? How about sharing general comments from examiners to help with preparation with exams or comments from supervisors to improve quality of log writing? How about a list of P2C course available through different LI branches or external bodies and sign posting P2C study groups? A bit of engagement would be nice for the 300 odd pounds you get from each candidate every year.

those taking our routes to Chartership, Fellowship and Technician status, as well as our membership experience of logging CPD. We are looking forward to sharing progress updates with our members as we go through this really important and exciting project. We hope for this new service to be in place in 2025 following a significant scoping period.

The LI Academy – Overview of the P2C Syllabus is an optional course for those who wish to consolidate their learning of the syllabus and prepare for the oral assessment and any final submissions left to do. It is not compulsory for members to take this course, but has proved very popular with our members who have attended. The course covers the cost of the facilitators day-rates and guest speakers, as well as the ongoing curation and review of the course which is overseen by our Chief Assessors. We think this gives the strongest preparation for candidates as also test assessment questions are given and delegates have the opportunity to meet assessors and practice.

Upon passing all our members receive a free digital copy of their certificate. We ask our members to pay for a hard copy of a certificate to cover the cost of the printing and fulfilment. Again, this is an optional charge and in line which what other professional bodies do.

We are still rolling out our entry standards throughout our membership grades which are mapped over to our competency framework. As you know we have successfully launched our Technician grade of membership (TMLI) with two routes coming through, our Experienced and Apprenticeship route. As well as this, we have launched our Experienced Route to Chartership and Expert Route to Fellowship. Our standard route to Fellowship (CMLI upgrade route) is now also mapped against the competency framework.

We are awaiting our new system as mentioned earlier, which we hope to launch in 2025. At that point, we hope to get all new candidates to be working towards their Chartership against the competency framework. For those already enrolled on the P2C programme and working against the syllabus, they would be able to finish their work against the syllabus. We would then give a timeline by which to finish the work, which is yet to be decided, where everyone would then be working on their P2C against the competency framework.

We shall certainly look at what else we can do to improve the pathway experience and thank you for your question.

7	My question is regarding the ways in which members are intended to be involved in decisions of the LI/ its structures and policy - specifically what are the mechanisms for members, & branch committees to feed into the LI's decision making processes? related to this what is the role of the branch reps to ADCO?	*All members can input to the LI either direct or via the appropriate committee.*
		Branch Representatives are Advisory Council members elected by a geographical region
	For example, urgent action was taken to branch finance, for understandable reasons, however the new financial processes for Branch activity appear to be being developed without any clear channels for input on options under consideration from Branches, and without clear responsiveness to Branch feedback? We had suggested there might be an online discussion "message board" or similar, where all branches could input thoughts in writing in a shared forum , rather than attend lengthy meetings where availability is difficult, and rounded discussions are hard to have, but not aware that this is likely to be implemented. OUr rep to ADCO was told they couldn't raise the topic for discussion in a recent meeting, and needed to stick to the agenda	*Branch Committees deliver local activity including events and liaison with other built environment bodies*
		We are currently working with members to review our branches and how we build better connections between the members and the Advisory Council and how we can work differently in the future to better meet the needs of members on the ground.
		Members are involved at all levels of the LI and directly influence policy, education, membership, standards, strategy, finance etc. Member consultation is a key part of the LI approach to project management
	There is currently a feeling of being somewhat 'shut out' from decisions that can have big implications, which is unfortunately demotivating for volunteers, and could in turn, disincentivise membership.	*In addition as part of new ways of working we are currently reviewing our standing committees and will be updating the membership directly at the conclusion of that work stream*
	Can the president / others present please advise are members generally intended to have a role in the development of the Institute's policies/ priorities? Are branch committees intended to have any role? What are the mechanisms in place for members involvement?	