

## **THE PROPOSED NEW INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY : MORE ABOUT THE IIE.**

Some of our members have expressed interest in learning more about IIE, our partner in the joint venture to create a new kind of professional body for the future.

With nearly 40,000 members in the UK and overseas, IIE is by a very large margin the fourth biggest of the UK-based engineering institutions. Its core constituency is among application engineers and technicians and its members constitute about half of the total of those registered in the UK in each of these categories. IIE's membership are multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary practitioners in a wide variety of fields right across the spectrum of ICT, electronics, electrical and mechanical engineering and associated disciplines such as building services. With its deep expertise in the support of applications engineers and technicians, IIE is recognised by its constituency as having the right kind of "no-frills" and user friendly approach to give them practical, tangible support in their careers.

Like IEE, IIE has recently decoupled its membership categories from registration, believing that it is to the benefit of the entire engineering community that all interested individuals should be able to participate in and contribute to its affairs; another main driver for decoupling was a significant international membership, to whom UK registration was less or not at all relevant. At the same time professional registration, in any member's country, is encouraged and IIE is now fully inclusive of all types of registrant, offering the opportunity to attain, for example, Chartered Engineer status in the UK in addition to Incorporated Engineer and Engineering Technician registration. This inclusive approach is of course now shared by both IIE and IEE.

Although IIE as we see it now was formed only as recently as 1998, it can in fact trace its origins right back to the nineteenth century. Regular reformulation and amalgamation of interests between compatible institutions occurred throughout the twentieth century. The institutions that amalgamated in 1998 to form the IIE were The Institution of Electronic and Electrical Incorporated Engineers (IEEIE), The Institution of Mechanical Incorporated Engineers (IMechIE), both the products of several earlier mergers, and The Institute of Engineers and Technicians (IET). In 1999 there was a further merger with The Institution of Incorporated Executive Engineers (IIEExE) and this year the Society of Engineers (SOE) joined with them. IIE is the product of a changing dynamic, so the prospect of forming a new institution with IEE is nothing new. In recognition of the importance of its members' contributions to wealth creation and society, like IEE, IIE holds a Royal Charter.

As in other professional engineering institutions, IIE has a charitable remit to advance knowledge and an understanding of engineering, to the benefit of society and the economy. IIE firmly believes that this can best be achieved by unlocking the potential of its members. Many of IIE's members are practically oriented, being devoted on a daily basis to making things work. IIE members seek useful knowledge, with appropriate academic underpinning, to enable them to get things done, and IIE's services recognise this. The keynote is interaction and the sharing of knowledge.

This is reflected in the way that IIE's services operate. The institution operates with interdependent member networks. The components of the IIE networks are:

- **13 UK Regions:** local networking, largely based on the geographical profile of the UK Regional Development Agencies. Additionally there are Sections within certain Regions, where distances make a spread of activities necessary. Sections work closely with and are accountable through their wider Regions.

- **4 Overseas Centres:** including the Republic of Ireland, Hong Kong (the largest Centre outside Europe), Cyprus and Zambia. The mission is to think global but act local. Other overseas countries are represented on a correspondent basis.
- **10 Special Interest Groups (SIGs):** facilitating information exchange in key technical/professional sectors - Contracting & Building Services; Education, Training & Development; Environment, Energy & Power; Information & Communications Technology; Manufacturing; Medical Engineering; Process, Control & Automation; Transport Engineering; Innovation.
- **Young Member Services (YMS):** tailored for students and young professionals up to the age of 35.

From a traditional structure of Regions, Special Interest Groups and Young Member Services, IIE is now moving towards an integrated approach that is mutually reinforcing and more effective in its service provision and use of resources. Hence the IIE Regions, SIGs and YMS are increasingly encouraged to work in concert and indeed operate from a shared funding pool, with resources being allocated on the basis of a sound business case. This initiative is being driven by the leaders of the three member groups themselves, who share enormous enthusiasm at the exciting prospects that exploiting the synergies of these groups can bring.

The touchstone for the IIE networks is interactivity, whether through real world meetings and visits of technological interest, or increasingly through virtual networking. The SIGs have been at the forefront of adopting an interactive e-mail / web-based system that permits instant response to online newsletter communications and tracks response patterns. This highly effective system is now in use by the Regions and YMS. The SIGs have also implemented virtual meetings software, which allows members to participate remotely in meetings held centrally or offsite at a company or other facility. Naturally this technology works well in enabling members to participate wherever they are in the world.

The Special Interest Groups have developed a very effective information service called 'Ask the Engineer'. Members who have a technical or professional query can pose a question and address it to other members registered with the SIGs for their job function and areas of expertise. Members in a particular field thus help other members to succeed; a range of answers will almost invariably be attracted, enabling the questioner to validate possible solutions to the problem posed. This has true Professional Development value, alongside the more formal PD and career enhancement advice offered by the institution. On the latter subject IIE, like IEE, offers advice on routes to registration, PD record keeping, CV preparation, job search and interview techniques. There is also an IIE Careers Service that matches vacancies in companies with individuals seeking a career move.

Also part of the vital information exchange at the core of IIE's member services is the institution's regular 64 page magazine, 'Engineering Technology'. This is published 10 times a year – monthly, with combined issues in July/August, December/January. 'Engineering Technology' has a unique blend of news, views and technical articles geared specifically to the needs of hands-on engineering practitioners. Moreover, though articles are widely sourced, there is particular encouragement for IIE members to contribute in their areas of expertise. This gives credence to the articles concerned, since they will reflect the knowledge of those who have real personal experience of the technologies they describe. This is another example of the 'member help member' tradition within IIE, mediated by staff.

Moving forward with IEE towards the formation of the new Institution of Engineering and Technology, IIE passionately believes that it has the expertise and service style that would bring immense value to the new body, encouraging all members to participate and benefit from shared

knowledge and experience. Responsiveness to member needs is at the heart of IIE's culture. Active members know that they will get a rapid response from a person they come to know, and whose opinions they value, whether it be face to face, at the other end of a phone, or online. With IEE representing a substantial part of the conceptual engineering community and IIE representing the bulk of applications engineers and technicians, the creation of a new institution by IIE and IEE would draw together all the key competences needed to create success within engineering businesses.

More information on IIE and its range of services may be obtained from its website: [www.iie.org.uk](http://www.iie.org.uk).