INTRODUCTION

Many CIBSE Presidents start their journey as President Elect visiting Hong Kong in November and then making their first visit to the ASHRAE Winter Conference the following January before the CIBSE AGM in May. John Field is at this point as he prepares to be President and I am sure John is thinking about and reflecting upon these experiences and shaping his Presidential address. I find myself writing this report not in a cold damp London but in a hotel room in a relatively warm, windy and very wet Orlando, as I also attend the ASHRAE Winter Conference. For me, comparisons are not only useful but also challenging. The ASHRAE numbers are impressive: over 50,000 attendees and over 2,000 exhibitors at the Expo and 2,700 attendees at the Conference, in spite of the severe storm in the US North East - even against the American scale these numbers are impressive.

However in my view, whilst the normal razzamatazz of our American cousins is always on show, I detect more heart searching and reflection this year. The importance of making connections, networking and supporting each other as espoused by the plenary speaker, Laura Schwartz, who was really promoting her book, Eat, Drink & Succeed – is all very American. So is the focus on membership numbers, which stand at 55,000.

ASHRAE membership has been steady at 55,000 for many years, but this masks a steady decline in the North American membership which is compensated by growth in other areas, notably South America, the Middle East and India. Both the importance of growing membership in “developing countries” and of nurturing the relationships with other sister organisations around the world are stressed. I am not predicting a wholesale change of ASHRAE ideology but it is certainly food for thought.

Many membership organisations seek growth in terms of numbers and CIBSE does that too but I can't help feeling that this is a crude measurement of success – our members are all from very different backgrounds and experiences but all of them seek to belong - after all it is voluntary and there is a choice. Why we join such organisations is often intangible but one of the facets of CIBSE I particularly like is the loyalty and passion in our members. So I am reflecting on how we could measure our impact for our members and potential members. Why do people volunteer, how do we make that easier and use their time more effectively, say thank you appropriately and encourage participation?

I habitually speak to the staff at the end of the year not only to take stock but also to look forward to the coming year. I did so again, just before the Christmas break and used the strap line “Best Ever”, and this seemed to catch people’s imagination. Indeed as I reflected on 2015, and we haven’t yet got the annual accounts complete, it does look as if many of our activities have been “Best Ever” – I would just highlight two firstly, the performance of the Journal not only in terms of editorial content, the eight supplements but also advertising revenue – while there is always room for improvement and I always like to see more technical content – you tell us that you really do read every page! Secondly, our Knowledge
Portal (KP), more downloads more hits, more countries than ever before and for the first time our hard copy publication sales are improved on the pre-KP era.

2015 also marked a significant amount of work by the Governance Task Force and I would like to add my thanks to those on the Task Force and in particular Graham Manly. The report was delivered to the Board, on schedule, in January 2016 and covered seven areas as directed by the Board. From the outset it was clear that this was a complex and crucial piece of work. At the Council meeting today you will have the opportunity not only to hear in outline the scope of this work but also the specific recommendations that affect Council and its workings especially in relationship to RLC. I am pleased also to say that the Board in January approved in-principle the seven strands of work while recognising there was still a significant amount of work to do in the implementation. I observe that many other PEIs are facing similar or greater challenges as society changes and has different views – my only request is that we work hard to communicate effectively, treat each other with respect and honesty while understanding that others may have different but equally valid views. I am sure CIBSE will be a much better organisation at the end of this process.

In the last few months we have been developing the detail for 2016 as the first year of our 2020 Plan. The Vision for CIBSE is being developed and tweaked, it is very hard to get the terminology right in such a diverse organisation but there is progress. What do we stand for, what is our mission and what does success look like? I know John Field is working hard on this. We have four main pillars and while much of this is covered later in the Report, I hope it will be useful to highlight some of it:

**Membership** – we have two new posts in the Membership Department to promote growth, and to re-shape the team; we still believe there is considerable growth potential in UK, mainly through company briefings, technical events and promoting our societies, regions, groups and networks. Equally International growth is seen as an opportunity too. My aim is growth in the corporate grades, as this underpins all we do.

**Knowledge** This year we plan a scoping study to help us identify the options for what we are calling Knowledge Portal (KP) Ver 3, subject to financial approval. For the Board Away Day in May we shall look at the “creation, dissemination & sharing knowledge”. The KP has been a wonderful success but we also need to maintain our momentum. I hope we can encourage knowledge creation “bottom-up” and use our IT platforms to add speed and agility.

**Performance** In my opinion we are well positioned already with our Building Performance Awards (BPA) – and I hope to see you on the 24th February at Grosvenor House but also at our Conference and Exhibition in the QE2 Centre in November. We need to further expand our influence and seek partners to develop the concept faster. I have said for some years my aim is to see the BPA having a similar profile to the Sterling Prize, but with more rigour! We believe we are moving in that direction.

**Services** In many ways our plans for the future can only be funded by the success of Services; I believe that with the appointment of Rowan Crowley as MD Services and our
current strong team we can deliver. There is again more detail in this report and we are all extremely positive. We just need to go and deliver the plan now.

Underpinning much of our business process development is our new IT platform. For the last five years we have been embarked on an IT journey to deliver this. In April 2014 we launched our new Content Management System which produced a better web presence and allowed some of our business process to be integrated. In October we had a soft-launch of our new Learning Management System We also have been trialling a new bulk email system and initial reports are very encouraging (Hurrah!). The next step is the new Customer Relationship Management system, using Sales Force and Member Nation. This will enable significant improvements in our communications with all of our customers, be they members, or low carbon energy assessors, buyers of publications or training or interested non-members. We are inching our way to the go live date, and although this has slipped, latest indications are for late spring this year. This has and continues to be a very stressful, challenging and difficult process for all of us involved - there is risk but equally the rewards will be substantial and the goal is to be a first class PEI.

I also must briefly mention premises; the heating to the Engineering Centre is currently down due to a fractured underground pipe from the Boiler House. The scaffolding supporting the boundary wall is only temporary until our neighbours can engage with us on repairing it. I am very sorry for any inconvenience this may cause. In essence the whole site is now very tired and your Board had the opportunity to have last month’s Board Meeting at the WWF Living Planet premises in Woking – we hope this will inspire the Board to create a vision for the future premises.

Finally, I must highlight the Global YEN Conference in Hong Kong last November. Not only was it a major effort but we also benefitted from considerable sponsorship from Ruskin. The Conference was timed to coincide with the President Elect’s visit and the Hong Kong Technical Symposium. They also enjoyed a Reception at the British Consulate General addressed by the UK Trade Commissioner and a number of high profile guests attended. Everyone I have spoken to thought it was a great event with huge benefit. I find it hard to think that YEN only started in 2006 and now has over 17,000 members. I must also highlight the forthcoming CIBSE Lecture on the 16th March at the Royal Society of Arts, given by Fiona Cousins, “How building services engineers can save civilization”. I am sure we shall be up for the task – and once again, I hope to see many of you there.