

IHBC's 4th Branch Connection Day: Communications

The Old Joint Stock, Temple Row West, Birmingham: 08 November 2011

KEY THEME: Communications; KEY TARGET: Publicity officers/Secretaries

GUIDANCE

Preamble

First and foremost we want participants to enjoy the day, while learning about what the national organisation is doing, and advising us on what is needed. If participants have any special needs or requirements please let us know and we will do our best to help. We do appreciate that participants will give up a day of their own time to help the IHBC develop, as well as to benefit the operations of their own Branch.¹

Background

Branches are central to the operations of the IHBC. Branch Connection Days were introduced to provide an open forum for national and Branch interests to come together and explore how the IHBC could deliver better services and outcomes.

For 2011 the Connection Day we will look at Communications, including our press and profile management, framed around our developing Communications Strategy. It will be led by the Chair of our Communications and Outreach Committee, Charles Strang (CS), with Sheila Stones, our vice-chair, as the lead officer linking to Council. This year, we are also investing in having our communications consultant along, Liz Coyle-Camp (LCC) of E=MC² (<http://www.emc2publicrelations.com/>), and she will both help provide answers to questions as well as use her own experience of the day to inform our communications strategy.

We also hope that our new President, Trefor Thorpe, will be able to attend, to contribute to discussions and meet members.

Information and preparation for participants

As ever, the Connection Day will build understanding across the participants and the different parts of the IHBC that they represent, while also providing an open forum to discuss the challenges faced within the different parts of the organisation. The agenda is kept sufficiently flexible for new themes to be introduced on the day, but we will be including a fixed time to look at the issue of how we organise communications within and across the Branches. This will help shape forward planning across the institute.

¹ The first Branch Connection Day, in November 2008, guided the IHBC's National Office on the needs and opportunities of Branches and their volunteers, helping inform our current corporate planning. Early output from that day included web-based guidance on roles for Branches committee members. The current Corporate Plan is a more recent outcome from those discussions. The Second Branch Connection Day, in November 2009, covered membership management and assessment, and guided the National Office on improvements needed in the application guidance. These are now reaching fruition with the impending launch of the new Full Membership Application Form. In 2010 the Branch Connection day was dedicated to financial issues, including financial management and duties in the National Office and Branches, financial allocations between Branches, and planning and claiming procedures. We are still progressing work arising from that, but already are able to include half-yearly statements for the Branches accounts in our reports to trustees.

Ideally, for this Branch Connection Day, Branch participants should be those holding or including aspects of a 'publicity officer' role, (perhaps an events officer or secretary), or someone with an interesting in this area (typically a Full Member of the Branch Committee). If no-one operating in any of these areas is available for the day, then Branches are encouraged to identify another alternate and draw their attention to any issues/queries that might be raised. Of course we know that not all Branches will be able to arrange representation on the selected date, but complexities of programme planning do mean that we have to accept that we will not get a date that suits everyone.

As Branch Connections Days are also an opportunity for volunteers to get to know better the people and services in the national organisation, often with an eye to future involvement with the national organisation, we would expect alternates to be at least Full Members or Affiliates with some career experience to their name, and/or individuals with an interest in getting involved in the organisation's wider operations.

Travel & timings

Participants are asked to make their own travel arrangements in line with our principles of using the most economical travel mode reasonably available. All travel expenses will be reimbursed on presentation of receipts (claims forms are on the web, and will be provided on the day). IF pre-travel funding is required, please contact the National Office. Public transport should be used if at all possible. Let the national office know if you need any additional assistance, and we will do all we can to help and guide.

The meeting itself will take place from 11am for networking and refreshments to revive those travelling longer distances (11.30 for presentations) until approximately 3.00 pm. As preparation, it would be appreciated if participants could familiarise themselves with their current Branch Business Plan, procedures for managing branch profile, including publicity for activities (especially if they are not already involved in this) as well as any other related issues the Branch would like to raise, as there will be time for more general discussion of Branch issues.

Outcomes

Outcomes from the meeting will include:

- the publication of the key points of the day
- guidance and support for managing Branch communications
- priorities for developing Branch communications within our forward plans
- better understanding of needs.

Structure

This **DRAFT** programme for the day is attached for consideration and comment. Please do feel free to suggest ANY additional items, and return to director@ihbc.org.uk, so we can incorporate them in the plan for the day. Discussion sessions will be informally structured around the themes identified below, with opportunities for exploring current practice.

Context for discussions

The starting point for discussions is the role of the Branch in the IHBC's Communications strategy, and how best we can build on and support local capacity there. The DRAFT of our communications strategy has been extensively circulated among council and Branch representatives there, as well as our Communications and Outreach Committee, and is circulated in advance of the meeting. Please review this – in particular regarding any of the areas highlighted because of their particular relation to Branch operations – and be prepared to raise issues or comments

Participants' Benefits

The Branch Connection day can count towards a delegate's compulsory CPD

Queries: Seán O'Reilly (director@ihbc.org.uk)

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DRAFT PROGRAMME

(NB: Subject to change to accommodate discussions)

11:00 Coffee/tea available

11.30 Welcome and introductions and review for the day: CS

11.45 IHBC Communications Strategy Review: (CS/LCC/ALL)

- Communications Strategy: Introduction & aspirations- – CS (Comms paper attached)
- Current services & practice- NewsBlogs; Publications; Web site; calendar/events;
Social networking (LinkedIn etc)-Branch web pages; Mass emails etc - SOR (Attached,
esp paras 1.a-1.c)
- Observations from the outside: LCC

12.30 IHBC Communications feedback: Branch perspectives and needs (All: Discussion)

13.15 BUFFET Sandwich Lunch (Working/Networking)

13.45 Priorities & support: Branches; National office; Committees & Officers

14.30 Forward Plan & Next Steps (All: DISCUSSION)

14.50 Conclusions

15.00 Thanks, close and depart

The Old Joint Stock, 4 Temple Row West, Birmingham

From New Street Station

Turn left into New Street and then right into Temple Street, at the T junction turn left then almost immediately right into Temple Row West. The Old Joint Stock is on your left.

