

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 10 September 2024



## International Association of Hydrogeologists

### DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING

The 2024 Annual General Meeting of the International Association of Hydrogeologists was held at 1730 BST (1830 CEST) on 10<sup>th</sup> September at the Congress Centre, Talstrasse 49a, 7270 Davos Platz, Davos, Switzerland, and online using Zoom. All members of the Association who had fully paid their subscription for the year were entitled to attend and participate in the proceedings. Guests were also welcome to attend. The presentation slides are available at <https://iah.org/members/iah-meetings>.

#### DRAFT MINUTES

1. Prof David Kreamer (DK), President of the International Association of Hydrogeologists, welcomed to the meeting, 73 members and 6 observers at the venue, and 8 members and 2 observers online. He acknowledged that some members were unable to attend the meeting because of other commitments, especially those in other time zones. He then asked for a moment's silence for members and colleagues who had passed away during the last year.
2. DK invited comments on the minutes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2022, available at <https://iah.org/members/iah-meetings> and then asked for a vote to approve the minutes. The minutes were duly approved.
3. DK was pleased to present the Presidents' Award to Jane Dottridge, long term member of IAH, and current IAH Secretary General (see <https://iah.org/about/awards> for further details).
4. Jane Dottridge, IAH Secretary General described progress with implementing the Forward Look programme and developments in IAH's international liaison activities.
5. Sarah Bourke, IAH's Vice President for Australasia and the Pacific, had agreed to lead the Education and Outreach Working Group and the development of a strategy and plan of activities for the WG was underway. A key aim was for better communications, including increased use of social media impact and Jane asked that members should do more to share events and tag IAH in their own online posts.
6. IAH continued to aim for involvement of more members in the Association's activities and she urged members to volunteer. She highlighted how the public awareness-raising activities under 'Hydrogeodia', started by the Spanish NC in support of World Water Day each year, were extending across Latin America and one event had taken place in Botswana. Jane encouraged all national chapters to establish their own hydrogeodays.
7. Jane informed members that Cliff Voss had decided to step down after 30 years as Executive Editor of Hydrogeology Journal. She offered sincere thanks to Cliff for the increasing success that had been achieved by HJ over the year. IAH Council in their meeting were pleased to appoint Jean-Christophe Comte of Aberdeen University and an Editor of HJ, who would take over from Cliff at the beginning of 2025.
8. Jane noted that the focus for the Strategic Overview Series of papers, which now extends to 16 titles, is on translating these and she called for volunteers to help with this. Additional titles were in preparation for the Technical Insight Series, following publication of papers on PFAS and Microplastics.

9. Jane then presented proposals agreed by IAH's Trustees and Council for revised Articles and Rules. These had been in preparation for nearly 2 years, following the decision of HSBC to withdraw banking services to IAH, with no reason given. Review and drafting of the revised Articles and Rules had been supported throughout by a consultant who had previously worked with IAH's regulator, the Charity Commission, and a lawyer specialising in UK charities.
10. There was considerable discussion of the proposals, focussing on whether members had been provided with sufficient information and had been allowed adequate time to review the revisions. The Executive Manager, Ian Davey, gave additional background information and explanation, which is set out in further detail in Appendix 1. Of those present in person, 71 voted in favour of the revisions and 2 abstained. Of those online, 3 voted in favour and the remainder declined to indicate support, opposition or abstention. The number in favour exceeded the threshold of 75% required for this vote and the revised Articles and Rules were accepted by the members.
11. Jane presented the Applied Hydrogeology Award (AHA) to two recipients: James Adamson, in recognition particularly of his long-term support for developing groundwater as a resource for rural water supply in Haiti; and to Zoran Stevanovic, for his contributions to water supply projects in low- and middle-income countries across the world and his renown for activities related to karst systems.
12. Marco Petitta, Vice President for Science and Programme, reported on IAH's commissions and networks (C&Ns). IAH's seven commissions focus on specific topic areas; its seven networks promote interaction on a global scale. He reminded those present that everyone can participate in IAH's commissions and networks, including non-members.
13. He noted that some commissions and networks were holding meetings, and hosting sessions at the congress, which is an important aspect of their duties. He encouraged all commissions to develop their scientific and technical activities, such as special issues in international journals, educational videos/documents, short courses, webinars, interaction with other groups and contributions to IAH's Technical Insight Series papers.
14. Changes in C&Ns during 2024 included: Maurizio Polemio as Director for the Network for Coastal Aquifer Dynamics and Coastal Zone Management (CAD-CZM); and Thomas Boving as Chair for the Groundwater Quality Commission. IAH Council had approved the establishment of a new Network on Liaison with United Nations Activities (LUNA), with Alice Aureli as Director.
15. Marco then presented the Distinguished Associates Award to: Chris Flavelle and Mira Rojanasakul of the New York Times; and Raphaëlle Aubert of Le Monde. The lead authors and investigators were commended for their investigative journalism on risk to groundwater from pollution and over-exploitation, but the award also recognises the inputs made by many of their colleagues.
16. Teodóra Szócs, Vice President, Finance and Membership, presented the 2023 accounts. Total income for the year was approx. £319K and expenditure was £324.5K, resulting in a deficit of £5,411. Currency exchange changes led to a 'paper loss' of £5,231. Reserves at the year-end remained sound at £261,660.
17. Significant costs during the year included support for the attendance of the IAH Council at the Council meeting and Congress in Cape Town and for delegates from low-income backgrounds. These costs were largely counter-balanced by total publishing royalties received of nearly £43K in respect of our journal and books, including a large back-payment for previously unpaid royalties for our book sales. Nearly £85K was held in the separate bank account of IAH's subsidiary, World-Wide Groundwater, following unexplained closure of IAH's own account by HSBC in 2022. Consideration is being given to

transferring this remaining amount to IAH's new bank account. The full accounts are available on the IAH web site at <https://iah.org/about/reports/management>

18. Members voted to reappoint Locke Williams Associates, Blackthorn House, St Paul's Square, Birmingham, B3 1RL, United Kingdom as the independent examiner of the Association's accounts for the next accounting period and to authorise Council to determine their remuneration.
19. Teodora then announced the recommendations of the IAH Council for the Honorary Members Award: Vicki Kretsinger Graber (long-term member of US National Chapter Committee and numerous affiliated groups), Neno Kukuric (former IGRAC Director, former joint leader of IAH's Transboundary Aquifer Commission and Groundwater Summit Coordinator) and Callist Tindimugaya (former IAH Regional Vice-President for Sub-Saharan Africa, amongst many other IAH roles). All were accepted by acclamation. (See <https://iah.org/about/awards> for further details).
20. The Executive Manager, Ian Davey, Returning Officer for IAH's elections, presented the results of the ballots. Details are shown in Appendix 2.
21. Newly elected President Teodóra Szócs, then took over as Chair of the meeting from Dave Kreamer, who assumed his role as immediate Past President. There was applause, for Teodora as she accepted her new position, and for Dave, in warm appreciation for all that he had achieved during his time as President.
22. Teodora informed all that the next congresses would be Melbourne, Australia in 2025 and Budapest, Hungary in 2026. She asked chapters to put forward proposals for subsequent years. She then invited Kelly-Jane Wallis, Tara Taylor and Ben Houghton of the Australian National Chapter to make a short presentation on the arrangements for the 2025 congress in Melbourne.
23. The meeting ended at 1915 local time.

**Ian Davey, Executive Manager**  
**on behalf of IAH Council, September 2024**

## Appendix 1: Background information to IAH Articles and Rules

1. As reported to members in the News and Information magazine in May 2023, IAH Council made urgent changes to the Association's governance, ahead of further consideration at the annual general meeting in September. This was necessary following a decision at the end of 2022 by our bank, HSBC, to discontinue providing a service to us. HSBC gave seven weeks' notice of termination of the account, leaving very little time to make alternative arrangements or to consider any strategic, longer-term needs.
2. Although no reason was given – and banks are not required to give reasons – we know that mainstream banks in the UK now require at least half of a company's directors to be based in the UK. There are similar requirements in other countries. Combined with this, there has been a growing reluctance amongst UK banks to maintain accounts for charities in the UK and it is clear that IAH's situation was not an isolated occurrence. Our finances continued to be well-managed and in good health, as confirmed by the accounts prepared annually by our auditors and submitted each year to the regulatory authorities.
3. The Charity Commission, IAH's regulator, advised that it is preferable for at least half of a UK charity's trustees to be based in the UK. However, they also told us that this is not an absolute requirement, and other factors, such as where the charity has its base, are also taken into account when deciding on continued eligibility for charitable status.
4. Changes were therefore put in place on an interim basis to bring IAH's governance structure in line with the expectations of UK banks. IAH Council proposed that Regional Vice Presidents should no longer have the formal legal responsibilities for IAH Ltd, or act as trustees for IAH as a UK-registered charity. They would continue to direct IAH's activities in pursuing its mission statement and charitable aims, and maintain their critical regional responsibilities for members and national chapters.
5. Two additional UK-based non-executive directors were co-opted to IAH's board so that, together with the members of the Executive Committee, 50% of IAH's directors (and trustees) are UK-based. Former senior IAH officers, John Chilton and Nick Robins, agreed to take on these roles.
6. Council voted to support these changes and the Rules were revised accordingly, for the time-being.
7. Despite this, most banks approached would not accept an application from IAH. Arrangements were eventually made:
  - initially with Wise, which is a 'financial technology' and electronic money transfer company, not a bank;
  - and subsequently with Virgin Money, a bank founded fairly recently (1995). (*In theory Virgin Money requires only one director to be based in the UK, though on 1 October 2024 it was taken over by another UK bank, Nationwide, and it remains to be seen what the future requirements will be*).
  - Some funds were also transferred temporarily to the account of IAH's subsidiary World Wide Ground Water, with the formal agreement of all directors.
8. A specialist contractor (formerly an employee of the Charity Commission, IAH's regulator) undertook a more comprehensive review of all of IAH's governance arrangements and documents, to make recommendations so that these should be fully in line with present-day requirements and that they should reflect the way that IAH expects to work in the foreseeable future. She confirmed that the interim arrangements were satisfactory.
9. These interim arrangements allowed each of IAH's officers to focus their involvement where it would be most needed. They also had the effect of streamlining overall

management of the Association. Council continued to delegate powers to the Executive Committee for day to day running of the Association. The term 'Council' would continue to be used, with the formal title of 'Advisory Council' to be referenced in the revised Articles.

10. The review also included the following:

- the involvement of ECHN in the governance of IAH and its groups;
- additional policies that should be updated or prepared such as those dealing with: equity, diversity and inclusion; financial reserves; data security; code of conduct.

11. Subsequently a lawyer who specialises in small UK charities was contracted to prepare revisions to the Articles, to bring these into line with the required new way of working; and to advise on any revisions needed for the Rules, to ensure that these should be compatible with the Articles.

12. The original Articles were drafted in 2000 in accordance with the UK legislation at that time, although subsequently, in general, the requirements of later, updated legislation would have been applicable. Revisions to the Articles therefore took explicit account of the requirements and format of more recent legislation (primarily the Companies Act 2006 and Charities Act 2011).

13. The revised Articles set out:

- the Trustees as:
  - four Elected Trustees (President; Secretary General Vice-President, Finance and Membership; Vice-President, Programme and Science Co-ordination;
  - a maximum of eight Trustees in total, with the number Co-opted Trustees not exceeding the number of Elected Trustees.
- the Advisory Council as:
  - the immediate past President;
  - up to eight Regional Vice-Presidents
  - the Director of the Charity's Early Career Hydrogeologists' Network;

14. Revising the Articles and Rules has been an iterative process. Several versions were prepared, in each case for review by the Executive Committee and co-opted Trustees, and periodically by members of the rest of IAH Council. In this way drafts were considered by IAH members' elected representatives and revised on their behalf to ensure their interests were properly assured. A final draft was prepared for presentation to members, prior to the Annual General Meeting in September 2024.

## Appendix 2: IAH Elections

Role	Candidate	Votes
President	<b>Teodóra Szócs</b>	988
Secretary General	<b>Jane Dottridge</b>	968
Vice President, Finance and Membership	<b>Julian Conrad</b>	952
Vice President, Programme & Science Coordination	<b>Marco Petitta</b>	977
Vice President, Asia	<b>Amarendra Kumar Sinha</b>	425
	Yan Zheng	307
	Jongje Kim	258
Vice President, Australasia & Pacific	<b>Sarah Bourke</b>	895
Vice President, Europe & Central Asia	<b>Valentina Rakhimova</b>	863
Vice President, Europe (West and Central)	<b>Bartolome Andreo</b>	647
	Tim Besien	299
Vice President, Latin America & the Caribbean	<b>Luis Camilo Suescún</b>	859
Vice President, Middle East & North Africa	<b>Joanna Doummar</b>	880
Vice President, North America	<b>Grant Ferguson</b>	576
	Tim Parker	300
Vice President, Sub-Saharan Africa	<b>Seifu Kebede Gurmessa</b>	851



Number of eligible members 4,405  
 Total number of valid voters 1,184  
 Turnout 26.9%

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