

# Secretary General's Report

Year ending 1 April 2015

*John Dickie, Secretary General*

## **introduction**

At this time IFSMA is in a secure financial position. This is being challenged over the uncertainty of the location of the Head Office in London due to changes in the landlords profile for ownership of the building at 202 Lambeth Road. The Marine Society is changing building and selling the original building.

The following report cannot cover everything that is conducted by IFSMA in the intervening time, but be assured that every effort is made to keep costs down and raise the profile of IFSMA in the marine sector.

## **Finances**

The following 3 budgets were presented:

- 2014 Final Budget
- 2015 Approved Budget
- 2016 Proposed Budget for Approval

In addition a copy of the Honorary Auditor's Report approving the 2104 Final Budget

In 2014 every association paid their fees during the year and this is greatly appreciated. The individual membership was reviewed and a number of members removed from the list, as they had not paid their outstanding fees.

To assist in controlling and identifying the financial position of IFSMA a new database was constructed so that all payments could be traced and tracked. This covers all associations and individual members and is operated by the office manager and reported back to both the Assistant Secretary General and myself.

For this year and 2016, we can predict with a high probability what the balance of payments will be and the position of IFSMA secured. The unknown factor is with the Marine Society & Sea Cadets and what they do and what will have to be done to find alternative office space and the costs involved. A further nuance on this problem could be the continued office sharing with CIRM. If they decide to not continue with IFSMA then the costs will spiral upwards.

This can only be addressed when confirmation of what will take place is known. The earliest opportunity for this will be August 2015. So we will have time to prepare for and budget for any change.

## **Office Refurbishment**

The core issues with this work are complete. The next phase that has been progressed has been the transfer of all IFSMA archives to a digital format. This has been a long process and has resulted in a lot of space saving. This would allow for a smaller floor space if IFSMA has to change offices in the future.

## **Membership**

### Associations

The associations are in good standing. There are only 15 associations outstanding in the fees to be paid for 2015. At the end of 2014 all associations had paid their dues for that year and were in good order.

The work of many associations is appreciated and their practical support on top of paying the annual fees enhances the work that IFSMA can achieve.

The only problem that still exists is the declaration of the number of members for some of the associations. This has been an ongoing problem from a long before I took up this post. I understand that times are hard and that many will question what does the subscription made do for them. That takes a lot of explaining but there is an ongoing engagement with the membership and a lot of work being initiated. The problem lies in the stagnation of possible further expansion, with lack of finances to support this. If everyone pays then there is no need to raise membership fees.

But to look at this in its proper perspective, if all associations declared only 30 members then IFSMA would be no more. It could not exist. The finances would not allow it to operate in any shape or form.

In addition, I have been looking at the associations with lower numbers and these will be noted with the membership declared at 30 then only those members of that particular association that have been recorded and noted at HQ will be covered and entitled for support from IFSMA in the event of them being involved in an incident.

I do not want to take this stance but IFSMA must be protected and continue in its work.

### Individual Members

These members have been completely over-hauled by an in depth analysis of who is a member of good standing, and who is not. A number of individual members who have not paid for more than 2 years and have not been able to be contacted by any means have been removed from the list of active members. This was a loss but has been offset by a number of new individual members who have joined.

## **Membership Fees**

It has been agreed at Executive Council that the membership fees for association and individual members will remain at the same level of £12 per year per member of an association and £60 per year per individual.

This will remain in place for 2015 and 2016, but it is likely that in 2017 membership fees will rise due to rising costs that are beyond my control. This may be averted if there is a substantial increase in the number of members both from associations and individuals.

## **IMO**

The IMO has been in transition in the way that it operates and the new set-up of sub-committees is bedding in to the cycle of meetings and the remit awarded to each of them.

The 2 yearly report to the IMO for the contribution that IFSMA has made was completed and accepted for the 31 March 2015. This shows IFSMA's contribution to the IMO and its ongoing work to promote the IMO throughout the maritime industry.

Over the last year IFSMA has attended all committee, sub-committee, council and assembly meetings and where necessary raised interventions on related topics. There have also been a number of papers presented where IFSMA has been co-sponsor and these have been with NGOs and Flag States.

IFSMA continues to be a member of the panel for the IMO Exceptional Bravery At Sea Awards, with Assistant Secretary General Captain Paul Owen a member of the Assessment Panel.

In addition, a lot of work is done in mentoring IMO Interns through the External relations department. This is a rewarding task which sees young people who are moving to advanced degrees being given opportunities to discuss where they are and where they want to go with their careers.

Over the last year there have been a number of persons and associations who have visited the IMO through IFSMA and enjoyed the experience of the tour and sitting in the gallery and listening in to the plenary in session.

At the beginning of this year the IFSMA website was updated with a new section of IFSMA at the IMO which details the General Observations and Interventions for each meeting that IFSMA attends

### **Conferences**

There is notice of at least one conference per week arriving at head office. The Secretariat reviews each of these conferences and, where possible, alert the national association to find out if they are attending or would be interested in attending the conference. In addition, where it has been decided that a conference will be of value or of relevance to the work that IFSMA conducts then this is passed on to the Executive Council for consideration.

It is important for IFSMA to have a presence at such events but only if there is a positive return on investment made.

### **NGO Group**

This has been successful and is growing with it now having 14 member organizations and meeting twice per year with no formal agenda but a lot of lively discussion. The two meetings per year is under discussion for increasing to three meetings per year.

IFSMA maintains its role as coordinator and host for the meetings, which are held at the Marine Society building at 202 Lambeth Road. The future direction of this group will be decided by the members and while it concentrates on Human Element issues in the maritime industry there is a sharing of information and resources to avoid duplication of work.

### **Criminalization of the Seafarer**

This is a major concern for all Shipmasters, but it is increasing to other ranks and the position of the industry is taking to prosecute seafarers through the courts of law where, in many cases, there have been miscarriages of justice. This is prevailing and increasing in number and severity of the sentences. Where appropriate IFSMA has spoken out on matters and been recorded in the maritime press. This will continue and the President will be the spokesperson for the association.

Recent cases which have been in the limelight are the Costa Concordia; Sewol; and Norman Atlantic.

The Costa Concordia has held the press attention since it occurred and the on-going work with the hulk is still to be completed and running way over budget.

While other crewmembers were able to plea bargain and receive light sentences; Captain Schettino felt the full force of the law. A sentence of 16 years and 1 month was handed down. He is appealing the sentence. Whether you like him; hate him or just believe that he was stupid is natural. What has moved into the background is that 32 people lost their life. This must never be forgotten.

The Sewol case went a stage further with the prosecutor demanding the death sentence for the master and chief engineer. This was deferred and a sentence of 36 years was imposed. Some of the crewmembers have lodged appeals against their sentences. This is due to the fact that all crewmembers were charged. The appeal has opened the door for the prosecutor to revisit the death sentence. Once again the loss of 302 people, the majority of them school children, is a terrible price to pay to open up the corruption on the domestic shipping sector. But do we demand the death sentence for people who were part of a terrible accident?

The Norman Atlantic is only just beginning but once again a passenger RoRo has been involved in a fire and loss of life. The master will await his fate along with several others. As this will be held in Italian courts the comparison to the Costa Concordia will be viewed and assessed.

One thing that is dominant through these and other cases is that the seafarers involved were not a member of IFSMA or of a national association and suddenly found themselves alone facing the wrath of a legal system demanding justice. It is then that they find themselves alone and without the financial resource to mount a defence. In many cases the seafarer pleads guilty to receive a lesser sentence.

## **Safety at Sea**

2015 started badly with a number of incidents occurring which reflected poorly on the industry and this is continuing. The issue of fatigue or "tiredness" continues and is accepted. The STCW and the MLC have started to work and this should be the starting point for the reduction in hours of work per day and per month.

The IMO works hard at improving the lives of seafarers and helping to protect them from accidents and make ships more efficient. There is more work and systems in place to move towards the unmanned ship. It removes the problem of fatigue but at what cost.

IFSMA is part of the group for the MONA LISA II project which is looking at ways to make ships more efficient and therefore effective. It is at the early stages but it is here to stay and IFSMA is making sure the position of the master is protected.

## **Conclusion**

The shipping industry is evolving and IFSMA has to evolve with it. How effective IFSMA can be will be dependent on the resources available to it and regrettably this will come down to finances. The limit of what can be achieved on the present financial position will soon be achieved and then it will be time to review the future. That is for the membership and the Executive Council to direct the Secretariat on what action to take.

The future is going to be exciting but also demanding of those who sail on board with the threat of prosecution hanging over them for making mistakes. This may be one of the core issues which will reduce the potential recruitment of young people into our industry or from remaining at sea. Therefore the unmanned ship may be needed sooner rather than later.