POLYMER SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014

1. Introduction
This is my final report as Chair, having served the permitted maximum of 2x 4 years. The current Vice Chair, Dr Alan Wood, takes over in January 2015 and he has contributed to the Strategy and Objectives section for 2015 and beyond.
In this report we give the highlights and lowlights of the year with starred (*) items noting our progress (or otherwise) on our current objectives.

2. Board membership
There were two resignations in the year due to job/role changes i.e. Ms Karen Hately who represented the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE) and Dr John Williams, Sinvestec LLC, who was our main link with the bioplastics sector. Neither has been replaced to date.
Representation and participation from the British Plastics Federation is still unresolved partly due to staff reorganisation within the BPF following the retirement of the Director General, Peter Davis.
Board membership currently stands at 14 plus a corresponding member representing the IOM3 Southern Africa Section (primarily polymer based).
Dr Keith Watkinson, Board Secretary, has settled in well to provide good support.

3. Board meetings
We continued to have three meetings in the year including one meeting online via Adobe Connect. The reduced travel incurred also satisfied our aims for reduced costs and sustainability impacts.
• 28th January at IOM3 London – 38 % attendance
• 10th June via Adobe Connect – 47% attendance
• 9th October at IOM3 London – 64% attendance
Two board members were only able to maintain contact and give input via sporadic emails due to their work situation but indicated that they would soon be able to return to ‘normal’ participation in 2015.

4. Activities during 2014

4.1. Technical programme
This has been a very significant year due to the success of PVC 2014 and RubberCon 2014, both which gave a major boost to the Institute’s Conference programme in the year.

4.2. Web-site developments (*)
In the latest figures available, the Polymer Society stands at position 4 in the league table of
home page views of all the technical divisions and committees. The RIEG also stands at position 9; both showing the benefits of regular updating, conference links etc. The PVC and PPE committees were near the bottom at 34 and 35 respectively due to lack of input and updating (a link to the PVC 2014 conference database was not applied for logistical reasons).

Microsite content information was also supplied for the impending upgrade to the IOM3 website.

4.3. Engagement with technical community and/or local societies (*)
This has not been a particularly good year for engagement with the polymer and elastomer community at large.

- The two year reciprocal membership agreement with SPE was terminated early at the start of the year as neither party seemed to be too interested in each other’s offerings. There was also an issue about regular engagement with each other to reinforce the agreement but SPE were unwilling to release addresses etc.
- We have agreed to establish links with the Polymer Processing Society, a worldwide organisation that organises conferences, but have no organisation base. All the work is done by the members themselves. It should have particular reference to our 600 members with an interest in this area.
- Contact with local polymer societies continues on an ad-hoc basis.
- For reasons that we now know to be software related, the planned Summer Newsletter to members was not distributed. (*)
- Participation via a stand in the relevant Polymer exhibitions, PDM 14 and Interplas, did not occur primarily due to stand manning issues.
  However the Polymer Society was represented at an industry awards evening (PRW) by presenting one of the awards and with subsequent promotion on the evening and afterwards in the paper and on-line.
- The Divisional brochure was updated, primarily for PVC 2014 and RubberCon 2014 delegates.
- The Polymer Society Exhibit in CHT (*) did not materialise yet.
- The situation regarding the MatKTN Polymer Sector SAC is still unclear. It is hoped that this will be clarified within the next few months and the hope is that the Board will still be able to support KTN Ltd.

4.4. Contributions to IOM3 house journals (*)

Materials World
Taking account of the various demands from all the technical activities, a reasonably satisfactory year for polymer related content. However the Board still needs to be more active in sourcing relevant material.
Plastics, Rubber and Composites: Macromolecular Engineering

PRC: ME is available now on Maney Online with IOM3 members having full online access to the journal. Table of content alerts are sent to all members who have specified an interest in polymers or composites (who have current email addresses and have not opted out of mailings).

For 2014 Volume 42 had ten issues throughout the year with 366 papers downloaded by IOM3 members.
The impact factor continues to improve and was 0.675 in 2013 (The impact factor is a measure reflecting the average number of citations to recent articles published in that journal).

4.5. Other

• Sustainability initiatives
It is recognised that the trade associations in our sectors are already working extensively in this area so we confine ourselves to working within the aims of the IOM3 Sustainability Policy.

• Awards and Prizes
This continues to be a regular agenda item to discuss and promote nominations for the Prince Philip, Hancock, Colwyn and Swinburne in their relevant award years.

For the 2014 Hancock Medal a suitable candidate (Ranjit Matthan) was submitted to the Awards Committee.

For the James S Walker, Anna Ploszajski was accepted as a worthy winner.

There were no nominations for the Prince Philip again despite all the efforts to promote and expand on the areas suitable for inclusion in this category.

• Cost Benefit to Members (*)
For 2013 the ‘crude’ figures available via ITPB (no reference to direct income from members/conferences etc) showed that the cost of meetings, staff support etc was in line with budget.

• Membership Initiative through Ian Bowbrick.
Ian Bowbrick has been active in visiting companies to recruit new or lapsed members with some success.

5. Strategy and Objectives for 2015 and Beyond
5.1. **Opportunities and constraints**
The main constraint is the need for improved ongoing contact between the IOM3 and the industries in the polymer sector.

One of the most active polymer-related areas within the Institute is that of rubber. Discussions are currently underway regarding the educational provision within the rubber industry with a view to the organisation of some form of formal training provision at a range of levels. This is seen as an opportunity to engage the industry with the Institute and develop better relationships. This will hopefully extend to developing links between such training and membership of the Institute.

5.2. **Specific targets for 2015**
The main target for 2015 will be the development of the educational provision for the rubber industry and the close linking of this with the Institute. If successful, this could be seen as a possible model for the plastics industry as well, this being explored once the rubber activity is functioning.

The relationship between the Board and the KTN needs to be maintained and strengthened in order to ensure strong links between the Institute, the KTN and Innovate UK. It is disappointing that the Polymer Processing SIG that was being investigated by the Materials KTN has foundered during the restructuring of the KTN activity. Strong links to the KTN and Innovate UK are required so that the Institute can be seen by the industries to be a significant contributor to research and development activities within the sector.

Joint activities with the Packaging Group are being developed and it is hoped that this will be the first of such collaborations with them and other Divisions within the Institute.

5.3. **Outline plans for the 4 years beyond 2015**
Outline plans for the following four years would include:

- Maintain conference and meeting activities to ensure the revenue stream into the Institute.
- Progress the training agenda which is under development and link this closely with the Institute.
- Maintain and develop closer links with other Divisions within the Institute.
- Attempt to develop closer links with local polymer societies.

6. **Other matters**
- Educational Initiative with RIBA
    Polymer Society support for the Riba ‘Design for Production’ lecture series with a lecture entitled ‘Polymers for Architectural Design’ commenced with lectures at Bath, Dundee and London South Bank Universities. Further venues in 2015 will be Cardiff, Northumbria, Huddersfield and Westminster.

Initial feedback and responses have been fairly positive but mixed due primarily to lack of materials knowledge and sustainability awareness by students and tutors.
• Student Design Innovation in Plastics (DIP)
The Worshipful Company of Horners and IOM3 continue to jointly sponsor the DIP Award with the focus of encouraging plastics design innovation and best practice in future product designers in the UK and Ireland.
The theme of the 2014 competition was Design for Learning – Innovation through Play and the six finalists were selected from a record number of 156 submissions from 16 universities. The 2014 award ceremony was hosted by IOM3 at 1 CHT (which transpired to be the last time at this location). Bayer MaterialScience continue to be the headline sponsor and hands-on committed supporter.
The 2015 design brief is ‘Design to transcend Metal: Changing Perceptions’.

• Southern Africa visit
The Chair was invited, through the Local Society Board, to attend the 32nd Foundation lecture of the IOM3 Southern Africa Section in Johannesburg in May. He gave a lecture on the aims of the Polymer Society, both in the UK and globally. There are three distinct geographical centres of the industry in Southern Africa and they are mainly concerned with rubber.

Web version – Stuart Patrick/Alan Wood 30th January 2015