

# Chief Executive Officer's Report

## IIMS Management Board Meeting

May 2026

### Introduction & Overview

IIMS is in excellent financial health, and the first half of 2026 will reveal turnover ahead of budget, costs on (or below budget) and profit well in excess of our expectations. The reasons for this extraordinary performance will become apparent as you read my report. But essentially, almost all aspects of the business are firing strongly and, in some areas, surging ahead. Jen will report the figures.

The strong first half performance means the year is already assured of being a financial success and if our current run rate continues, we are likely to see a record profit.

I have said before but will repeat it. IIMS has become a complex business as we have grown our range of products and services in recent years. That requires more management time to assess our progress and strategy planning to keep looking ahead to ensure we can maintain this step change and growth as we forge ahead.

### Head Office Matters

The team seems settled. We have continued to be dogged by health challenges affecting some of the team, but all seem reasonably fit at the moment.

IIMS will be exhibiting at the Seawork show in Southampton the second week in June on the Workboat Association stand with a 3x3 metres space and the team will rotate to man the stand over the three day event. I am expecting a good event, meeting plenty of members. We are taking hard copies of the li-ion guide and will split copies between the media and press centre, and our stand.

Our next ISO 9001:2015 audit is coming up. We have extended our scope to bring our Certifying Authority into the standard as follows:

*Training services in marine surveying. Administration, management, and certification of vessel coding activities for commercially operated vessels under 24 metres, undertaken under delegated authority from the Maritime & Coastguard Agency for applicable Merchant Shipping Regulations and Red Ensign Group Flag State requirements, including the management and oversight of authorised surveyors.*

This scope extension moves the audit from a one day affair to a two and a half day affair. We have yet to see the final audit plan. The first audit day is in person on Friday 12 June. The second day in person follows on Monday 15 with the final half day the following day online. It is a tough and demanding schedule and is being carried out by two auditors. Cam will have an update

## Update on ship registry negotiations

This continues to be an ongoing challenge, and it is hard to get anything over the line. Progress is tortuous and slow.

Discussions with the Belize registry continue, but the scope of the project has been watered down. Currently we are focused on discussions about IIMS training Belize flag state inspectors, but it is still unclear what this training might look like. In terms of how it could be delivered, that is easier. I have mentioned to their executive team that we could have a private area within the on-demand training portal where these individuals can pay, study and sort out their CPD requirements.

As far as I am concerned, discussions have concluded with Antigua & Barbuda, pending the award of a contract to launch a certifying authority for them. The final draft contract is with them and has been for several weeks. I know their legal team is studying and looking through it. I await more news from their side.

## Branch News

I have held a couple of meetings with the IIMS Canada committee to discuss driving more membership in their region and engaging with stakeholders, including Transport Canada. We have also talked about the Canadian website being handled locally (the only regional site that would not be directly managed by HQ) as part of this initiative using their choice of third party outsourced media specialist. I have agreed but only on the proviso that our external web guru is involved to keep an eye on things.

## Committee meetings

The education committee has recently met and had the chance to review the progress being made to reshape the modules and succession plan.

The Certifying Authority committee is due to meet in the coming weeks, and we have a full and busy agenda to get through.

## Membership

Inbound membership applications have remained strong.

Chris will have a full report.

The process of limiting new applications to 5 categories that we implemented earlier in the year is not without challenge. Many seem incapable of reading the instructions, meaning Rachel has to go back to them and ask them to reduce the number of categories they are applying for. We now have in place a mechanism for those new members who want to seek more categories once approved.

The matter of getting members to review their existing surveying categories I raised is still under discussion. But a gentle but firm approach would seem to be best. It is clear this is a major challenge and undertaking, but one we need to make a start on after I make an announcement at the AGM. I chatted with Geoff about his listing on the search app – he has 11 headline categories (and materials

subsets of each too). He assured me all are regular surveying experience activities but agreed that probably surveying superyachts over 24 meters could probably be dropped and perhaps workboats. So, trying to impose a minimum number will not work. My biggest concern, however, is not the number of listings if they can be substantiated, but the fact that people list things they no longer or cannot do. That is the real issue.

There remains the opportunity for any member to include additional text of course on their listing apart from their regular surveying activities - for example, "I can also advise on wooden boats and workboats", and so on.

## Certifying Authority Update

Following the launch of the Sport or Pleasure Vessel code last December, I received a letter which revises our existing MCA CA agreement to reflect the new code and our responsibilities as a CA. I have signed and returned it.

The annual MCA CA BCC meeting has been held in Southampton attended by all CAs and MCA executives and staff. Dave and I attended to represent IIMS. It was the usual mix of largely dirge. However, something of importance did emerge. I will explain more at the meeting.

We are expecting the date of our next external MCA audit soon.

IIMS has representatives on the semi-regular MCA online meetings to review and interpret a range of matters arising from the WB3 and new Sport or Pleasure Vessel codes.

The processing of tonnages has performed strongly in the first half. In April we equalled our best ever month with 101 processed. We also launched our fast track tonnage service at an extra charge, which guarantees a same day turn around. There have been some takers.

The situation surrounding the awarding of the RNLI contract is bizarre. At the time of writing, no contract has been signed, six weeks plus after the process closed. IIMS was informed we had not won the business, and we were offered a feedback session as to why. I responded to say yes please, but radio silence since. I spoke with the MECAL CEO, the winning CA supposedly, and he tells me that no contract has been forthcoming. In the meantime, a revised draft Search & Rescue Code has been circulated, which could be the reason for the delay. It is far from clear.

## Education & Professional Qualifications

The main reason for such a robust financial performance this year is the surge in new students who are studying one of our Professional Qualifications. The trend set in from January and has continued strongly across the year to date.

I cannot be sure of the reason for this surge, although it did coincide with one of the key changes in the work going on behind the scenes with our digital marketing campaigns. Changes to our LinkedIn and Google campaigns, involving new algorithms, are generating better targeted and engaged leads for Vicki to follow up.

I gave Ian Wilkins notice in writing by email from the end of June to step him down as the tutor/marker for Module 1. Geoff is now rescripting and reordering that module and will take over the marking in due course. He has not acknowledged my email!

Vicki has produced a report on the work going on in the education department. We are advancing well with reviewing and reworking many of our modules. Ken Hickling is well underway with writing a new module on marine coatings, and Nick Parkyn's new module on rigs, masts and sails is in for design, for example.

## Apps & Innovation

The significant investment undertaken earlier in the year to upgrade the software packages to support the two CPD apps and the surveyor search apps have been completed and paid for. They are running without issue.

We are in the early stages of looking at the possibility of developing the IIMS report Writing software with the help and guidance of Craig Noron (InspectX). After the last board meeting when we established a group of board members willing to share some reports, Craig has been working in the background. Nothing to share yet.

I have continued my discussions with Nick Parkyn to assess the possibility developing a training a small language GPT. Again, as of yet, I have nothing to share at this stage.

## On-Demand Training Portal

The number of people joining the portal grow steadily. We now have 210 logged on. Still not enough courses and being studied. So far 120 have been studied and the income generated is modest. The lithium-ion course continues to be the most popular.

It is simply a case of continuing to promote the portal at every opportunity.

## Training & Online Seminars

This is a quieter year for training following my extensive travel overseas last year.

The online lecture by Mike Lewus on microbial corrosion drew over 60 paying surveyors.

The two day Palma event at the end of April was a great success with some excellent feedback received. Although it is largely the same delegates each year, this is actually one of the event's strengths as the reason to bring these surveyors together. This year we were joined by three students who found it hugely beneficial to chat with each other about their ongoing studies.

Paul and I are delivering our 3 hour report writing seminar on 12 May 2026.

In late June we are delivering a full day on rigs and masts. The morning is being spent at Selden Masts in Gosport – 20 attendees only. But the afternoon session and masterclass being delivered by Kim Skov-Nielsen will also enable online delegates to join the training.

We have a two day Irish event planned for late September at Shannon Harbour. Damian Buckley is putting a heritage steel hulled vessel he has completely restored into the dry dock and we will spend the day with a range of related topics. The following day is dedicated to classroom training – schedule to be confirmed.

There is interest from potential delegates for the next iteration of the Practical Surveying Course which we have relocated to Port Solent in early October. We also have some interest in the Practical Boat building weeklong residential course we are bringing back to the Boat Building Academy at Lyme Regis.

## Surveyor Complaints

We have no new complaints, but have

## Marketing & Communications

As mentioned earlier, we are working closely with GAIN (formerly Vertical Leap), as they make changes to the below the line marketing. The budget has been increased modestly, but the results are spectacular so far.

Last year we averaged about 400 membership leads each month. To remind you. For those with the term marine surveyor (or similar) in their profile, they will be served an advert. We have tested various creative formats. They are then invited to download a copy of The Report. In exchange we get their email address and other relevant information. Last month, our leads hit 975 – that means nearly a thousand new readers of The Report. Rachel then cherry picks the most suitable one to follow up with a personal email.

LinkedIn continues to inspire with nearly 12,000 connections now.

## Handy Guides

The collection of handy guides has now hit thirty, which feels like an achievement!

The two latest handy guides are both authored by Peter Broad.

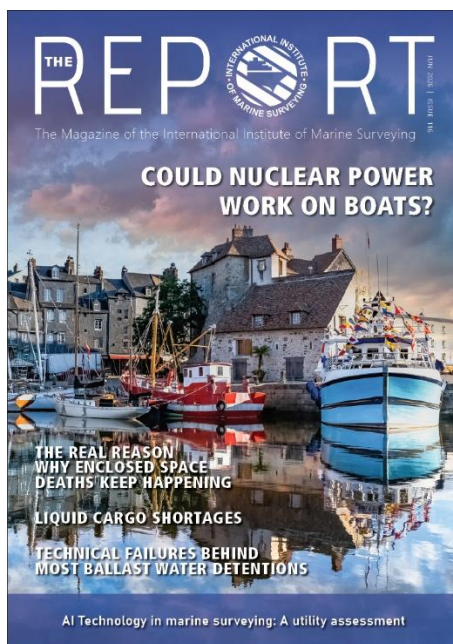
*'What a marine surveyor knows about marine classification society and statutory surveys: An introduction'* was published in March.

This was followed by *'What a marine surveyor needs to know about becoming an expert witness'*, published in May.

Handy guide sales made a slow start to the year and are behind budget, although they have picked up in recent weeks and the gap is closing.



## Report Magazine edition 116



Yet another cracker of a publication, the diversity of which is extraordinary, covering many varied surveying topics. Here's a flavour of some of what is on offer:

- Responsibilities and authority of a ship's Master regarding the ISM Code
- Could nuclear power work on boats?
- The road to trouble is paved with many good intentions (lithium-ion battery guidance)

- Breaking down the barriers to HVO adoption
- Safety helmets: When standards fail stevedores, crews and marine surveyors
- Rescue and Restoration: A snapshot in the journey of Heritage Boat 43M
- Safety considerations for fixed CO2 fire-extinguishing systems issued
- Post-fire ship hull structure and material assessment
- Superyacht surge: The rise of the new lifestyle-driven boater

## IIMS Niche Products

### RMCI

These days we only run one course per annum, which is taking place in mid-May online and in-person near Viareggio, Italy, tutored by Ken Hickling and Rory Marshall. The take up for this course has been exceptional with a dozen participating worth c. £27k in fees. At the time of writing, I do not yet know the results of the formal examinations.

We are making slow progress with the roll out of the new RMCC (consultant) standard. We have set up a pilot group and testing the process with them currently to understand if our offering is both correct and fit for purpose. Work is ongoing.

### YCTI

In June we have a large 12+ course being held at MB92 in Barcelona for their in-house team. This is a breakthrough and generates great revenue. Sharon has held courses in Palma and the UK recently. Numbers remain slightly disappointing and it remains a hard concept and project to sell. But when I speak with those who have undertaken the course, they are full of praise for the tutors and the material especially. We have tried various marketing tactics but with little reward to date.

On the plus side, Sharon and I have recently had two very uplifting meetings with New Zealand and the U.S. We recently organised a stakeholder meeting, the first in a long while, and our contact at ICOMIA has connected us. Also back in the loop is Robert van Tol, who has taken over as CEO of SYBAss (Superyacht Builders Association). He and I go right back to the start, and he is a big fan of our work. He plans to reinvigorate his members to keep RMCI firmly in their sights.

MAST is a training organiser and provider based in New Zealand (I was actually in their offices in Auckland last year)! We presented YCTI to their executive team and they are keen to get behind it and to promote it to their NZ and Australian database. Getting traction down under has always been an issue, mainly finding the right contacts to butter up. It seems we might have done that now. Early days.

The same contact also introduced us to American based Pettit paint, a well-known and long established North American brand. The States has also provided some barriers for us. We spoke at length with two of their senior executives, both of whom are ex AkzoNobel and both of whom know Ken Hickling well! So, we are off to a good start. Both men said the yacht coating sector is in dire need of improving and they believe they can help us to introduce both RMCI and YCTI into the North American sector. They have the contacts and we have the material ready to deliver. We are scheduling a follow up meeting.

## eCMID

There is a challenge looming, which is being imposed on us by the IMCA secretariat and presents a threat to the eCMID scheme. At the most recent committee meeting, the IMCA COO (appointed at the start of this year) popped up to address the meeting without warning.

He informed those present that IMCA has 54 committees, which, in his view, is far too many. I agree – it is absurd! He is therefore inviting each and every one to make the business case for their ongoing existence by way of a presentation to the IMCA board on an as and when basis.

We are protecting about £200k of income and one full time IIMS job if the scheme were to go down.

I am part of a small working party that has been formed to develop the business case for the eCMID scheme and its ongoing existence.

Kerrie Forester (CEO Workboat Association) and I have spoken privately and have agreed that in the event it was closed by IMCA we could run it; but that would not be without considerable hurdles I suspect. There is also the matter of the 5 year contract we have with them too. Our first meeting is scheduled soon.

In my opinion, the business case is quite simple. The eCMID scheme has gone from strength to strength in the past decade. There has been a surge of new applications since January, renewals are strong and our training courses are full each month. The scheme is adopted and well respected by many of the larger offshore operators and it produces a net income from the upload fees for IMCA.

Recently, we produced a quality short video which we encourage new applicants to watch before applying to help us manage their expectations.

I am hosting and anchoring the Festival of Knowledge XII on 13 May which has attracted over 60 paying delegates.

## External Work & Commitments

### MCA

We continue to engage with MCA on a number of fronts. I have privately messaged senior MCA executive to express my concern about the situation that looks likely to render over 1,000 workboats suspended at the end of this year and unable to work. No reply.

### Maritime Professional Council

MPC work has continued. IIMS produced a great podcast for the MPC based on a script produced by a professional journalist. But there were some negative comments from some MPC members, including “I don’t like the voices” and I don’t think the script is right, but I don’t know what’s wrong with it or how to improve it”. So, I have now removed IIMS for now due our workload and someone else in the group will need to pick it up. A wasted opportunity!

### IMCA

From my earlier comments, you will understand things are tricky with IMCA whilst we plan the way ahead with the eCMID business case.

The international workboat best practice guide that I was involved in putting together with others is now finished and ready for circulation. But IMCA seem to have gone lukewarm on it, so Kerrie and I are looking to see if we can take the publication for sharing amongst our audiences.

## BSS

Graham Watt (former manager of the Boat Safety Scheme) is working on a project as a consultant for them. He was very taken on our li-ion battery guide and has asked if he can use some of the content. They are preparing to launch a major li-ion battery awareness programme to be rolled out across the UK inland waterways network for all involved. He has asked me to peer review their leaflets and guidance. Happy to oblige if I can!

## IAMI membership

The International Association of Maritime Institutions (IAMI) is a global network of maritime training and education providers, who deliver training across the maritime sector in Merchant Navy, Superyachts, Towing, Restricted Waters/Tonnage, and Fishing Industries.

IIMS has applied for membership – it is only £120 per annum. We are now subject to a review before acceptance by their membership committee.

## Superyacht Alliance

This one is on the face of it slightly obscure. I have been in dialogue with Hein who set this up on and off the past two years. The founders are the usual suspects - ICOMIA and SYBAss for example. Hein is keen for IIMS to join the Alliance. They are keen to develop a database of approved large yacht surveyors and to provide training initiatives. Dialogue is ongoing.

Mike Schwarz

*11 May 2026*