



The Fibreoptic Industry Association

[www.fia-online.co.uk](http://www.fia-online.co.uk)

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## **FIA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2016 - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

In 2015 the FIA reached a major cross road in its history, celebrating 25 years as your trade association. This year we are at another cross road with membership falling to an unprecedented low. Is it the fault of Brexit, Trump or other unsettling scenarios both nationally or internationally or something deeper rooted? Your Council, made up of volunteers. Is working hard to revitalise the FIA and various initiatives are in hand to promote and sell the FIA services to a wider audience. We need your help to, so please make sure that your colleagues and customers get to appreciate what the FIA can offer in technical support, training guidance and standards bodies representation.

Our 2016 Summer Seminar went back to Whittlebury Hall in June and was yet another outstanding success with 50 delegates and a room full of table top exhibitors. John Marson, our Commercial Director, has already secured two main sponsors for 2017 and I would like to once again thank him for organising the 2016 event, as well as Mike Gilmore for the pulling together an excellent speaker programme, Alan Bullen and Frank Kler for the pre-Seminar Accredited Installer programme and Jane Morrison for all the back-office work, along with the rest of the Council Members and the support of the sponsors.

Membership numbers have dropped from the typical 180-190 to 155. Numbers usually fluctuate with some disappearing and new ones coming on board in equal amounts. This year we've seen a similar number disappear but not had an equivalent number join. New initiatives are in hand to try and recover the situation, including market analysis, revamped website access and direct 'face to face' contact alongside the other promotional activities such as the vehicle stickers, Linked-In User Group and our long-established Newsletter.

Mike Gilmore stood down from Council last year as both Treasure and Standards Director, but has continued to support Standard activities on behalf of the FIA representing your interests on European and International Standards committees and various trade bodies. His excellent work, for which he has my heartfelt thanks, ensures continuation of one of the FIA's essential remits providing members with the latest information and affording you the opportunity to influence standards and working practices.

Website development & maintenance, and production of the Newsletter is being ably undertaken by Jonathan Lewis, in the new role of Communications Director. He also participates in UK Standards Development, supported by his employer, Huber & Suhner.

Alan Bullen, having taken the AIS to new heights since its inception, has now passed that role to Frank Kler, and has instead taken on the dual role of Treasurer and Marketing Director. His first marketing role was to ask the membership what benefits they valued the most. Top of the list were Technical Info, Access to the website, and Standards Body

Representation. With a drop in our membership of nearly 30% over the last 2 years Alan has put in place a plan for the FIA Directors to meet face to face with existing and potential new members over the next 6 months. Alan will table his Treasurers Report separately.

Frank Kler, now our AIS Director, is building on the work that Alan started by continuing to give installers access to risk reduction practices, continuing professional education and free access to the FIA Arbitration Scheme. The Accredited Installer Scheme continues to gain ground with growing attendance at the quarterly seminars held through the year.

John Colton's involvement in various local community broadband projects still absorbs much of his time but it provides some interesting insights into issues raised in planning, application and testing. Consequently, John has taken over the role of Technical Director, and supported by Mike Gilmore, has been dealing with those burning issues that you, the members, have raised.

Our new Council Member, Nigel Hedges, is getting immersed in his adopted role as Training Director, and has started a project, supported by our Qualifications Director, Simon Comben, to identify core skill sets that the membership feel they need and that the FIA see as key in training courses on offer and recognised by appropriate qualifications. Simon also continues to maintain his MOD Liaison activities for members wishing to gain MoD N Cage Accreditation.

Once again, I must reiterate that Council Members are all volunteers with much of their time being given freely and I am pleased to see that we continue to have other volunteers willing to fill the vacancies on the Council. It is only with their commitment, and the goodwill of their employers, that the FIA can proactively represent our industry. The support that they, Jane Morrison in the Secretariat, and Margaret McFarlane in Accounts, have provided to the FIA and to me as Chairman, has been invaluable, and so on behalf of the Members I would like to thank them for their efforts on our behalf.



Paul Bateson - Chairman