

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of virtual meeting held Thursday, 16 May 2024

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Jonathan Scarsbrook (JS), President, formally opened the meeting and thanked those attending for joining the meeting. JS also thanked those who voted in the recent APIL additional officer elections. JS outlined the agenda:

- Review of the year
- Financial report
- Election results
- Close

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Brett Dixon (BD), Secretary, opened by saying despite 2023 being challenging for APIL operationally, we achieved a great deal. APIL campaigns, research and training continued at the highest level.

Our powerful film, Victoria's Story, part of our Rebuilding Shattered Lives Campaign, won gold in the best blog, podcast or video category at the Association Excellence Awards, and was shortlisted in the best use of video, animation or audio category in the 2023 Memcom Excellence Awards. This was a huge boost for the campaign.

BD highlighted the widespread coverage of our messages in national publications. Last year this included The Daily Telegraph, The Sun, Daily Star, Daily Mail, and The Times, as well as many trade publications. Our commentary and opinion pieces covered a vast range of issues including redress for child abuse survivors, women in the law, the personal injury landscape, proposals for a dual discount rate, and our campaign for fair redress for victims of asbestos-related lung cancer.

Through our campaign work across X, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, we have built a community of 20,000 social media users. APIL members gave an unprecedented response to a call for action on bereavement damages when we asked them to lobby their MPs. The lobbying succeeded in highlighting a profound injustice at a time when the majority of children are now born to parents who are unmarried. Our Injury Awareness Week 2023 reached millions of people. We received an impressive level of support from member firms, parliamentarians, businesses and charities. Our lobbying work also contributed to the withdrawal of the Bill of Rights Bill.

We prompted a fresh Government consultation after issuing judicial review proceedings against the Lord Chancellor. Even though – on receiving our letter before action – the Government issued a consultation suggesting it may concede some important points raised, we issued proceedings to challenge several aspects of the new rules to extend fixed recoverable costs in personal injury cases. BD thanked those members who provided comments on their firm's practices, witness statements and support for this work.

Last year we were also granted permission to intervene by the Supreme Court in the whiplash mixed injury claims, *Rabot v Hassam*, *Briggs v Laditan* which was heard this year, finally bringing to a close the uncertainty around valuing mixed injuries cases.



APIL's input is regularly sought by governments and legal bodies across the jurisdictions. Last year we saw approaches from the Law Commission of England and Wales regarding the current product safety regime, the Department for Health and Social Care on mandatory licensing for special procedures in Wales and from the Scottish Government regarding recoupment of Scottish-only benefits, to name a few.

Last year APIL responded to 29 Government consultations challenging the impact of reform on injured people, including a licensing scheme for non-surgical cosmetic procedures; a review of the Package Travel Regulations; court fee increases; the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme; and fixed recoverable costs for lower damages clinical negligence claims. BD thanked the special interest group co-ordinators for assisting with some of those responses.

Through research we exposed how victims of crime are being drastically under compensated if they do not challenge the CICA's decision. Our analysis of CICA data uncovered how victims of crime face being under-compensated by tens of thousands of pounds if they do not challenge its decision making. Our research also uncovered a "gender justice gap" in work-related injury or illness. On the eve of International Women's Day we published new research which found women are three times less likely than men to claim compensation for a work-related injury or illness. Each year we continue to work collaboratively with defendants and insurers, where we can, on initiatives to help injured people. This also continued last year with our Serious Injury Guide work.

On the membership side APIL welcomed Justin Mingaye as the new Head of Membership Services following the retirement of Marlene Lord. We started work on improving our membership journey to ensure our processes make it as easy as possible for members to engage and get the most out of their membership. In 2023 we worked on a new membership policy setting out changes to the membership criteria which took effect in January 2024. We delivered 125 conferences, webinars and courses – with extremely high satisfaction levels. We helped even more people find a lawyer with the right expertise and in 2023 we received some 2,692 enquiries from the public, a 15% rise on the previous year.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mike Benner (MB), Chief Executive, presented the financial report on behalf of Gordon Dalyell, Treasurer, who could not attend.

MB outlined that in the world of campaigning there is never a quiet year and 2023 has been no exception with our campaigns reaching into practically every area of personal injury law. Our work is as essential as ever. It has certainly been a year of change for our association and we have been faced with significant operational challenges, increased costs and continued headwinds. Despite this we have continued to focus on our campaigning work and the provision of excellent training and benefits for our valued members. Working towards our vision of 'a society without needless injury, but when people are injured, they receive the justice they need to rebuild their lives' has remained at the forefront of our minds each and every day.

As a not-for-profit organisation we have carefully used cash reserves to invest in our capability in our campaigns and legal affairs teams to make sure that we, as a unique voice for victims of negligence, can be effective when faced with a bombardment of our sector by a Government which seems hell-bent on widening the justice gap whether through whiplash reforms, unworkable fixed recoverable costs reforms, out-dated bereavement damages, or a failure to act to support survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

The year 2023 saw big changes at APIL, with a start to the year with a change to our budgeting process. Instead of the usual one-year budget, we produced a three-year budget aligned to our strategic plan. 2023 would be a managed deficit of around £100,000, while we invested in our capabilities and new income streams.

2024 would see APIL break even, and 2025 would see APIL in a position to deliver sustainable continued profit over a number of years, enabling us to grow our reserves and continue investment in the organisation. However, due to two significant departures from APIL's senior management team a rethink was required with regard to operational pressures. In light of these changes, it was decided that we would pull back on our development of new projects and concentrate on our 'core' activities of membership and training.

MB reported that turnover for the association rose by £59,411 (3.2%), with our training activities remaining a mixture of online and in-person. Both residential conferences were held in person, with the option of attending virtually.

Membership income improved on the previous year by £26,090 (4.2%). Membership subscriptions account for 38% of APIL's income, followed by training activities at 27% and conferences at 29%. The direct costs of providing APIL's activities rose by £68,156, an 11.5% increase on the previous year. This was mostly due to an increase in the cost of providing training events and also the cost of publishing our revamped PI Focus magazine.

Due to external factors outside APIL's control, we saw rising overheads over the course of the year. As usual, we kept a tight control over these. They were £48,411, higher than 2022. We expect these costs to continue rising in 2024 and beyond.

The operational deficit, before bank interest and capital expenditure, stands at £-100,574. APIL has spent £45,667 on a Judicial Review of the extension of fixed recoverable costs (October 2023 reforms). At the time of producing the annual report that was ongoing and we incurred costs into 2024.

At the end of 2023, APIL's reserves, which consist of property, assets and cash, stand at £911,085. Within this, an operational reserve fund equal to three months' worth of operational costs plus an additional £100,000, has been set aside. We also have the remainder of the designated funds for JR / intervention and strategy spends. MB said he believed the investments and changes in 2023 put APIL in a strong place for its growth journey to ensure we are able to effectively face the headwinds against our sector in 2024 and beyond.

We are a unique community of dedicated personal injury professionals and our strength lies in our ability to work together towards our campaigns. MB said he was grateful for the leadership and support from the APIL Officers, Executive Committee members, and all volunteers. MB also thanked the hard working staff team for their commitment, dedication and hands-on attitude.

MB thanked APIL members for their support during 2023 and said he looked forward to working with you and your firms in our ongoing fight for the rights of victims of negligence.

ELECTION RESULTS

BD said that following a call for nominations for the positions of President, two Vice-Presidents and Secretary, the following APIL members were elected unopposed:

Kim Harrison as President, Matthew Tuff and Guy Forster as Vice-Presidents, and BD as Secretary.



All candidates are automatically elected and will start their terms of office after today's AGM.

JS automatically remains on the executive committee as an Additional Officer in the role of Immediate Past President for a term of one year.

Additional Officers' election

There were two vacant additional officer positions, with six candidates for these two vacancies. All candidates were eligible to be elected as ordinary officers on the executive committee. There were no invalid votes.

The election result is as follows:

Candidate	Votes cast
John McQuater	154
Suzanne White	118
Ben Posford	76
Richard Barr	41
Paul Morpeth	39
Andrew King	21

Additional Officer

John and Suzanne are elected as an additional officers on the executive committee having polled the most votes of the candidates eligible to hold this position. John and Suzanne will take up their positions after the AGM.

Presentations

Suzanne Trask has decided to stand-down from the APIL EC following five years as an additional officer and more recently two years as APIL's Vice-President. Suzanne has been a huge supporter of APIL over the years and will be greatly missed. Suzanne is not here today but our thanks go to her as she steps down from APIL's executive committee.

As there was no Any Other Business, BD formally closed the AGM.