

“Whither our PEIs? The Uff Perspective”, Keating Chambers, 15 November 2017

For the first of a new style of the Worshipful Company of Engineers’ early-evening lecture-seminars, Liveryman Professor John Uff CBE QC FREng generously hosted 42 Liverymen and guests at Keating Chambers, on 15 November 2017 when he summarised his review “UK Engineering 2016” commissioned by ICE, IET and IMechE. The report

(<https://www.raeng.org.uk/publications/other/uk-engineering-2016>) addresses concerns that:

- 1) there are too many Professional Engineering Institutions (PEIs) and that they are not sufficiently engaged with the engineering profession
- 2) leadership of the engineering profession is fragmented and ineffective
- 3) there is no reliable data as to UK’s requirement for more skilled engineers
- 4) promotion of engineers and engineering is ineffective.

He noted that there are 35 PEIs with historical divisions between them which are outdated and that their membership amounts to a small proportion of the roughly four million people in engineering work in the UK.

Presently, only 20% of schoolchildren in the UK study mathematics after GCSE, which is very much less than in other countries. The courses offered to them by universities are constrained by the specialisms of the PEIs with few universities offering multi-disciplinary engineering courses. On a more positive note, degree apprenticeships are now being offered which combine work experience and study without accompanying debt.

His review recommends a joint body to promote mergers of PEI activities leading to a situation where members of any PEI could access the facilities of others. He also recommended that the grades below CEng be combined into a single grade of “Registered Engineer” and that registration be offered to the wider engineering community at modest cost.

He recommended changes to the work of three bodies: the Engineering Council, which oversees professional standards; EngineeringUK, which promotes engineering to the profession and the public; and the Royal Academy of Engineering, which represents the profession to government. He recommends that the activities of EngineeringUK be merged with the promotional work of the Royal Academy of Engineering.

John Uff’s presentation was followed by a lively Q&A, including contributions from senior figures from several PEIs. In view of the Chatham House Rule, such comments were off the record. Nonetheless, there was a general view that the findings of John’s Review warranted action beyond that of the commissioning PEIs and Liverymen were invited to engage with their PEIs to see what is happening. After the Master Engineer presented John with a Stirling Engine to commemorate the event, debate continued over light refreshments kindly provided by John’s Chambers.



Donations from delegates generated £315 for the Engineers Trust.