



**Belfast Branch**

Annual General Meeting – BCS Belfast Branch

Chairman's Report

20<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Dear Colleagues,

It has been an interesting and exciting year with the highlight being the highly successful visit of the Turing Lecture to Belfast in February. This was the first time that the Turing Lecture has been delivered outside Great Britain and, following a major lobbying exercise by members of both the Belfast Branch of the BCS and the IET, the organising committee agreed to bring the lecture to Belfast as part of the first ever Northern Ireland Science Festival. Not only was the subject of the lecture, 'The Internet Paradox: How bottom-up beat(s) command and control', highly topical but the lecture itself proved both informative and enjoyable. It was delivered by Robert Pepper, Vice-President, Global Technology Policy at Cisco in the magnificent Great Hall in Belfast City Hall and over 450 attendees of all ages heard Robert Pepper outline the impact that the Internet of Things is having on society and technologists alike. It was truly a remarkable evening and the splendid Great Hall in Belfast proved a fitting backdrop. The result was also equally impressive because the Turing Lecture will return to Belfast yet again in February 2016.

Thanks for such a marvellous job must go to our local organising committee and, in particular, to Bob McLaughlin and Paul Hanna who were key players in securing such a remarkable result. I'd also like to personally thank all my colleagues on the Committee here in Belfast for all their efforts and to the team from BCS Headquarters who have provided support over the past year.

This year has seen remarkable change across the ICT landscape here in Northern Ireland. Inward investment continues apace with a range of new knowledge economy companies arriving in the region. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) remains at the forefront of thinking of the political, administrative, economic development, HE and FE functions of the Executive. However, there was a major casualty during the year; namely, MomentumNI, which closed its doors due to cash flow issues. This will leave a major hole and the ICT industry has been left with no single concerted voice advocating on its behalf. This is particularly concerning given the impact this may have on the growing knowledge economy.

In terms of events, I'd like to thank a broad range of people who have given up their time to arrange a disparate range of events throughout the year. Once again we ran the 'CV and Interview Skills' event in January. This has been a cornerstone of our yearly planning and I hope it continues. This was followed by a Fellows' visit to Wright Bus in Ballymena to learn about how the modern connected bus is revolutionising public transport.

We supported the 'Explain Like I'm 5' events at Farset Labs throughout the year and in April we heard from the PSNI's Cyber Crime team on the effects of 'Emerging Cybercrime in Northern Ireland'. The 'Digital Everything' event in May, organised in conjunction with Fujitsu, proved highly successful and attracted Jim Fitzpatrick, the broadcaster, journalist and voice behind 'The Profit Margin', who covered the event on his weekly podcast.

Specific mention must go to both Lynne McQuitty, who stepped into the breach and ran this year's 7-a-side Football Tournament, and John McCloy, who once again organised the Annual Golf Outing at Malone Golf Course.

The winner of this year's BCS Prize for Computing at Queen's University was Fiachra Murray, who achieved the highest average marks in the final Honours examination, and the BCS Prize for Computing went to Mark Freebairn.

The 'Northern Ireland IT Professional of the Year' event at Ten Square attracted an excellent crowd and we heard from the President of the BCS, Jos Creese, about his theme for the year which is 'apprenticeships' and John Healy from Citi provided a fascinating insight into his work as Chair of the Matrix Foresight Report on Digital and ICT across Northern Ireland. Coincidentally, the IT Professional of the Year Award for 2015 went to John Healy and this year the Committee decided to award a prize for 'Young IT Professional of the Year' that went to the very worthy winner, Gareth Workman from Kainos.

I'd like to thank both Bob McLaughlin and Ron Perrott for providing their services as a judging panel, Brightwater Recruitment for their generous sponsorship and Business First Online Magazine who was the media partner and will continue this role as we run up to the next Turing lecture in February next year.

It has been a pleasure serving as Chair of the Belfast Branch of the BCS during 2015 and I'd like to pass on my personal thanks to the Branch Secretary, Peter McMahon, for his commitment and efforts over the past few years and who will be stepping down from this position at the AGM.



Chair of the Belfast Branch of the BCS

20<sup>th</sup> October 2015