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From the President: a long and winding road

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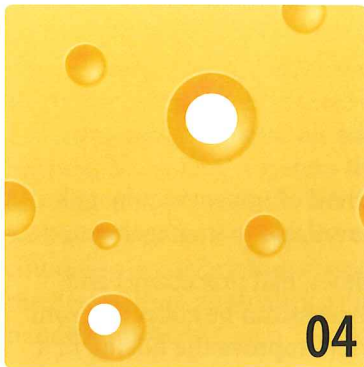
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From the President



A long and winding road

It has been a long journey but at the end of May we received the news that at a meeting of the Privy Council held at Buckingham Palace, Her Majesty The Queen had approved an Order granting a Charter to the Institute.

I am told by those with longer memory than mine that aspirations towards chartership were being discussed by the then Ergonomics Society in the 1980s, if not before.

Investigations into chartership in the 1990s concluded the Society was too small, had too much overlap with other already chartered professions, and the process would be too costly to be viable.

In 2002 it was examined again, resulting in several of us meeting with the Deputy Clerk to the Privy Council, a meeting from which we came away encouraged. Between now and then, much work has needed to be done lobbying government departments whose support would be crucial to the success of the petition. The Institute also needed to ensure there would be no objection from cognate societies with whom our interests intersect. It was also a mammoth task to prepare the Charter and Byelaws, the governance documents under which the Chartered Institute will operate and which the Privy Council and Charity Commission needed to approve.

So what actually is a Royal Charter? Chartership is a historic form of incorporation,

i.e. establishing an organisation as a legal entity, the earliest being granted to Cambridge and Oxford Universities in the 13th century. The Privy Council explain: "The grant of new Charters is rare. New grants of Royal Charters are these days reserved for eminent professional bodies or charities which have a solid record of achievement and are financially sound. In the case of professional bodies they should represent a field of activity which is unique and not covered by other professional bodies. At least 75% of the corporate members should be qualified to first degree level standard. Finally, both in the case of charities and professional bodies, incorporation by Charter should be in the public interest."

For the Institute, it is endorsement from high authority of our collective importance and professionalism. In achieving this we join the likes of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (granted 1920), British Psychological Society (1965), British Computer Society (1984), Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (2002) and the British Occupational Hygiene Society (2012).

There are still things that have to be done before the Charter takes legal effect, with the Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors expected to be formed January 2015. More details of how the Charter will be celebrated and promoted and what it means for members, will follow in future articles.

Best wishes