



British and Irish
Ombudsman Association

ANNUAL REPORT 2008–2009

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Objects of the Association

The objects of the Association are:

- to encourage, develop and safeguard the role and title of Ombudsmen in both the public and private sectors
- to define, publish and keep under review criteria for the recognition of Ombudsman offices by the Association
- to accord recognition publicly to those persons or offices who satisfy the defined criteria for recognition in:
 - the United Kingdom
 - the Republic of Ireland
 - the Channel Islands
 - the Isle of Man
 - the British Overseas Territories
- to formulate and promote standards of best practice to be met by Ombudsmen in the performance of their duties
- to hold meetings, conferences and seminars, publish information and engage in all such other activities as may improve public awareness of recognised Ombudsman schemes and encourage their efficiency and effectiveness

Foreword by the Chair of the Association

As I wrote in *The Ombudsman* newsletter last year, my election at the last Annual Meeting (in Edinburgh) as the Association's Chair was not only a great honour for me, but also for the Ombudsman community in Ireland. I have enjoyed my first year in office immensely and I am certainly looking forward to the next one!

There are many interesting things happening in BIOA at present (described more fully elsewhere in this Report), the most significant of which are:

- The continuation of the 'Governance' Working Group, leading to the eventual publication of the 'Guide to principles of good governance'
- The 'Accreditation' Working Group working with our consultant, Nick O'Brien, to set up a pilot accreditation course later this year
- The review of the future direction of the Association, working with our consultants Carolyn Hirst and Professor Janette Webb
- A look at how internal communications within the BIOA membership can be improved

All of these issues are important and could well have a beneficial effect on staff of member schemes by maximising the benefit of their schemes' membership of the Association. The 'Accreditation' project, for example, is designed to provide professional recognition to case-handling and investigation staff through the means of recognised accredited training programmes. Improved internal communications, resulting in the raising of BIOA's profile among staff, will enable more staff to take part in BIOA regular events (described fully in this Report), which those regular participants find useful.

As I mentioned in the newsletter, I believe it is time once again to take stock of what members want from the Association. The last such review was undertaken nearly five years ago, and so the Executive Committee has initiated a new survey of BIOA members, the results of which will be known in July. Based on the outcome of this review, consideration will be given to the future direction of the Association.

The Association has taken the unusual steps recently to engage the services of consultants, both for the 'Accreditation' project and for the 'future direction' review. So much very valuable work within BIOA is undertaken voluntarily by members, and staff of member schemes, assisting with seminars, Interest Groups, Working Groups and with the newsletter, for which we are eternally grateful. However, there is a limit to people's time and goodwill, and the Executive Committee therefore took the decision to utilise some of the Association's modest reserve funds to 'buy' expertise in these two areas, on a very limited and controlled basis.

I am very grateful to all my colleagues on the Executive Committee for their support and energy during the year, and especially to Jerry White, the Association's Vice Chair who, together with the Secretary, takes the lead in contact with the UK government and agencies. There are inevitably



some changes now on the Executive Committee. Alice Brown and Elizabeth France both left the Committee at the end of the year on retiring from their respective roles as Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and Chief Ombudsman of tOSL (Telecommunications, Energy and Surveyors Ombudsman). Alice and Elizabeth each served on the Committee for three years, and I am most grateful for their energy, support and wisdom during that time.

Also stepping down from the BIOA Executive Committee, after five years, is Caroline Mitchell, Ombudsman at the Financial Ombudsman Service. Among other things, Caroline was the initial Chair of the Governance Working Group, and was responsible for the first draft of, and consultation with, members about, the 'Guide to principles of good governance'. I know that my fellow Executive Committee members will want to join me in giving a special thanks to Caroline, the longest current serving member of the Committee.

I would also like to thank BIOA Secretary, Ian Pattison, for his invaluable work and support over this last year. He is a superb colleague and great thanks are due to him for the efficient and dedicated way he goes about his job. I suspect however that he never thought that he would be spending quite so much time on this side of the Irish Sea!

Finally, as mentioned earlier, I am very much looking forward to the year ahead, and to see the fruition of the valuable work currently being carried out including, if required, the charting of a new course for the Association. I very much hope that the pilot 'accreditation' course will be supported by member schemes and will prove successful, resulting in further training being carried out. I look forward to the publication of the 'Governance' guide, which should be useful to existing members, but particularly to those contemplating setting up new Ombudsman or complaint-handling schemes. And, a final very big 'thank you' to all of you who have assisted the Association and its work in any way.

Emily O'Reilly

Annual Meeting 2008

The 2008 Annual Meeting of the British and Irish Ombudsman Association took place in Edinburgh on 9 May at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and was attended by around 160 members, staff of member schemes and guests. On the previous evening there was an Association Dinner held at The George Hotel in Edinburgh attended by around 130, following a 'fringe' event for managers and case workers of member schemes held during the afternoon at the office of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (see below).

At the Annual Meeting, in addition to the formal business of the Association, external speakers presented on the theme of '*Ombudsmen and the changing world in which we operate*'. The programme was as follows:

Annual Meeting of the Association

Chair: **Tony Redmond**
Chairman, Commission for Local Government in England (Local Government Ombudsman)
Chair, British and Irish Ombudsman Association

Opening remarks

Kenny MacAskill MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Scottish Government

Consumer Issues

Chair: **Brian Taylor**
Political Editor, BBC Scotland

Speakers: **Dr Sharon Gilad**
Lecturer in Public Sector Organisation,
King's College London

Susan McPhee
Head of Social Policy & Public Affairs,
Citizens Advice Scotland

Regulation

Chair: **Jane Irvine**
Scottish Legal Services Ombudsman
(Designate: Chair, Legal Services Complaints Commission, Scotland)

Speakers: **Professor Sir Graeme Catto**
President of the General Medical Council

John Elliott
Registrar and Director of Regulation, Law Society of Ireland

Administrative Justice

Chair: **Professor Alice Brown**
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Speakers: **The Rt Hon the Lord Newton of Braintree**
Chair, Administrative Justice & Tribunals Council

Professor Trevor Buck
Professor of Socio-Legal Studies,
De Montfort University

Brian Thompson
Senior Lecturer in Law, University of Liverpool

At the 'fringe' event, attended by some 40 staff members of BIOA member schemes and held at the offices of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, the following topics were covered in workshops:

- Internal appeals – facilitated by Kerry Barker
- Learning from complaints – facilitated by John McLuckie
- Dealing with challenging behaviour – facilitated by Valerie Malloch and Sally Collingwood

The minutes of the Annual Meeting, covering the formal business of the Association, are available to members and staff of member schemes in the 'members' area' of the BIOA website. Items covered during this part of the meeting included:

- Address by the outgoing Chair, Tony Redmond
- Presentation of the Annual Report for 2007/08
- Election of the Chair and Executive Committee, as follows:
 - Emily O'Reilly (Chair)
 - Alice Brown
 - Elizabeth France
 - Ros Gardner
 - Paul Kenny
 - Caroline Mitchell
- The Association's finances and budget for the current year
- Reports on the 'Accreditation' and 'Governance' Working Groups
- Changes to the Rules of the Association to increase the number of Executive Committee members by two, and to allow for the appointment by the Executive Committee of a Vice Chair

[Under these new Rules, at the Executive Committee meeting following the Annual Meeting, Jerry White and Suzanne McCarthy were co-opted onto the Executive Committee and Jerry White was elected Vice Chair.]

The 2007/08 Annual Report is available to view or download on the BIOA website (bioa.org.uk) and is available in printed form on request from the Secretary (secretary@bioa.org.uk).

Autumn Seminar 2008

During the years between the Biennial Conference, the Operational Management Seminars Group (formerly the Operational Management Interest Group) traditionally runs an all-day seminar for BIOA members and staff of member schemes. This year was no exception, and the Autumn Seminar was held at the new offices of Lawrence Graham, Solicitors, at 4 More London Riverside, London on 7 October 2008. We are most grateful to Lawrence Graham for allowing BIOA to use its premises and facilities. Around 90 people attended the Seminar, representing 34 different organisations.

The two topics discussed were:

First Contact

Looking at 'gateway' services for Ombudsmen and complaint-handling organisations

Chaired by: **Caroline Mitchell**

(Ombudsman, Financial Ombudsman Service)

Speakers: **Paul Kendall**

(Head of Customer Contact Division, Financial Ombudsman Service)

Neville Jones

(Deputy Local Government Ombudsman for England)

Carol Neill

(Outreach Team Leader, Scottish Public Services Ombudsman)

John Gillies (Programme Manager, Citizens Advice Access Strategy)

Performance management systems

Systems and people working together to ensure the right things happen

Chaired by: **Jerry White**

(Local Government Ombudsman for England)

Speakers: **Donna Bateman**

(Senior Manager for Review Operations and IT, Independent Review Service)

Siobhan Coughlan

(Programme Manager – Service Transformation, Improvement & Development Agency)

Clare Brannigan (Computer Application Services)

Dr Sharon Gilad (London School of Economics and King's College London)

Annual Meeting 2009

The 2009 Annual Meeting takes place on Thursday, 7 May 2009 at the University of Warwick, during the Biennial Conference.

Biennial Conference 2009

The Association's 2009 Biennial Conference takes place at Scarman House Conference Centre, University of Warwick on 7 and 8 May 2009.

Following the success of the 2007 Conference, when numbers were increased to 200 (the maximum bedroom capacity of Scarman House), once again there are up to 200 delegate places available at the Conference. The Conference will commence at the earlier time of 11.30am on Thursday, 7 May and will end at lunchtime on Friday, 8 May.

The Conference will celebrate 200 years of the institution of the Ombudsman (the first Ombudsman in its present form was introduced by the Swedish Constitution in 1809), examining how and where BIOA and its member schemes fit into that landscape, with the overall theme of ***much done – still more to do***.

As well as an initial plenary session, followed by the Annual Meeting, there will be a mixture of large workshops/discussions and more traditional smaller workshops, as follows:

Plenary session:

The future direction of BIOA

Annual Meeting:

This session is for all Conference delegates. As well as reports about the ongoing work of the Association, the Chair is hoping for a lively debate on BIOA's future direction.

Large workshops/discussions:

- Research into public sector Ombudsmen and Administrative Justice
- Trends in consumer redress
- Public redress
- The institution of the Ombudsman

Smaller workshops:

- Consultations – a level for change?
- Information security
- Freedom of information
- New media and the Ombudsman
- Unacceptable behaviour
- Governance
- Managing customer expectations
- Accreditation
- Equality and diversity
- Equality of access and the investigation of discrimination complaints
- Training for bodies under jurisdiction
- Knowledge management

A full report of this 2009 Conference will be in the August 2009 issue of 'The Ombudsman' newsletter, as well as in next year's Annual Report.

Annual Meeting 2010

The 2010 Annual Meeting takes place on Friday, 14 May 2010 at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. It is also planned to hold an Association Dinner the day before, on the evening of 13 May, at the same venue.

External relations

Liaison meetings with government

The Association continues to have dialogue with the UK Government about Ombudsman issues.

Meetings between BIOA and representatives of the Cabinet Office were held in July and November 2008 to discuss matters of interest. Discussions have continued to be primarily about revised Cabinet Office guidance to departments about Ombudsman matters, as well as about raising the profile of BIOA within departments and with Ministers and MPs. It was confirmed that these meetings should continue regularly, and sometimes with the designated representatives of the Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR) and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

At these meetings, BIOA was represented by the Vice Chair and the Secretary.

Responding to consultations

During the year, the Association has formally responded to the following issues, consultation papers and requests for evidence:

- Competition Commission: *proposals to establish an 'Ombudsman' to oversee the Groceries Supply Code of Practice*
- National Consumer Council: *the NCC pamphlet 'lessons from ombudsmania'*
- Law Commission: *consultation paper 'Administrative Redress: Public Bodies and the Citizen'*
- Scottish Parliament: *review of SPCB supported bodies*
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education: *Pathway Project*

Where appropriate in responding to issues and consultations, the Association continues to campaign to encourage government bodies setting up, or approving, new schemes which meet the BIOA criteria for Voting membership to be called Ombudsman schemes, rather than other names such as Commission. Conversely, it also continues to campaign for the protection of the word 'Ombudsman' to avoid 'the risk of damaging the credibility of the Ombudsman 'brand'.

Working with the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council

The Association has a long history of co-operation with the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council (AJTC), and its predecessor body, the Council on Tribunals (CoT).

Regular meetings continue to be held between members of the BIOA Executive Committee (currently the Vice Chair and Secretary) and the Chair of the AJTC, Lord Newton, and members of its Secretariat. A meeting of the AJTC's newly-formed 'Ombudsman Task Force' held in November 2008 was also attended by those representatives of BIOA.

Work in progress

Governance

The 'Governance' Working Group was originally set up by the BIOA Executive Committee during 2006. The Working Group Chair, Caroline Mitchell, reported to the Annual Meeting on 9 May 2008 on the progress of work so far, including the consultation with members on the initial draft 'Principles of good governance' document. With that significant milestone achieved, and with several members of the original Group having left due to retirement, Caroline stepped down as Chair. The Executive Committee is immensely grateful to Caroline and the original members of the Working Group for the considerable work they have done on this difficult topic.

Paul Kenny, the Pensions Ombudsman for Ireland agreed to take over as Chair of this Group and, together with fresh members to replace those who have left the Group, to develop the draft 'Guide' towards its completion, taking account of the various responses received from the consultation. This reformed Governance Working Group continued during the year to progress towards the production of a second consultation document, having taken into consideration the views of those members who responded to the first consultation.

The BIOA Executive Committee has approved the general approach to the work suggested by the Working Group, namely that the finished document should be one of high-level principles, with sufficient detail included to explain them, but that more detail with illustrations and examples should be given elsewhere, possibly on the BIOA website.

The Terms of Reference for the Group were also confirmed as:

To identify those general principles of governance relevant to Ombudsman and complaint-handling schemes which allow those schemes to function appropriately, including:

- *drawing up a statement of those principles which underpin the BIOA core criteria of independence, fairness, effectiveness and accountability, while recognising the diversity of schemes and the need for flexibility*
- *publishing a high-level statement of those principles which can be used as a guiding principle by existing schemes, by those seeking to set up new Ombudsman and complaint-handling schemes and also by other interested parties such as consumer organisations and the recipients of schemes' services*
- *publishing elsewhere (possibly on the BIOA website) details and examples to illustrate those high-level principles*

A progress report on this 'Governance' project will be given at the BIOA Conference in May 2009, together with a workshop.

The Working Group members are:

Mike Biles	Housing Ombudsman
Christopher Hamer	Ombudsman for Estate Agents
Paul Kenny (Chair)	Pensions Ombudsman for Ireland
Mick King	Deputy Local Government Ombudsman for England
Ian Pattison (Secretary)	BIOA Secretary
Mike Reddy	Deputy Adjudicator, Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Bill Richardson	Deputy Chief Executive, UK Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman for England
Pat Whelan	Director General, Ombudsman for Ireland

Professional development

The 'Accreditation' Working Group was set up by the BIOA Executive Committee during 2007, and continued to meet during this year, with Ros Gardner as Chair. She made a presentation to the Annual Meeting on 9 May 2008 outlining the progress of the project so far, and the Working Group then subsequently successfully submitted a proposal to the BIOA Executive Committee to engage the services of a suitable external person on a paid part-time basis, for a limited period, to assist with its work.

After an open competition, Nick O'Brien was appointed to that role. Nick will be well known to many in BIOA for his previous work at the Legal Services Ombudsman, then with the Disability Rights Commission and also for his regular contributions to 'The Ombudsman' newsletter. Nick has also been for many years a member of 'The Ombudsman' newsletter Editorial Board and a regular contributor to it. His primary tasks, reporting to the Chair of the Working Group, are to:

- Agree draft 'competencies' with the Working Group and sample schemes
- Ensure quality, consistency of content and proficiency of suitable providers
- Work with suitable providers to develop pilot courses, including content, criteria, delivery methods and recording of successful attendance on courses
- Investigate 'kite-marking' by BIOA, or by using an external agency

It is currently planned to run a pilot course in the last quarter of 2009. A progress report on this 'Accreditation' project will be given at the BIOA Conference in May 2009, together with a workshop. The Working Group members during the year have included:

Kerryn Ashton	Senior HR Advisor, Local Government Ombudsman
Rita Crawshaw	HR Manager, Local Government Ombudsman
Ros Gardner (Chair)	Independent Complaints Reviewer for the Criminal Records Bureau
Lorna Hearson	Head of Learning and Development, Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman
Liam Kelly	Head of Personnel and Finance, Ombudsman for Ireland

Niki Maclean	Head of Services, Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Fiona McCarney	Training Officer, Ombudsman for Ireland
Suzanne McCarthy	Immigration Services Commissioner
Mike McMahan	Training Manager, Financial Ombudsman Service
David Moorehead	HR Manager, Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Ian Pattison (Secretary)	Secretary, British and Irish Ombudsman Association
Mike Reddy	Deputy Adjudicator and Chief Executive, Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Susanna Reece	Senior Assistant Adjudicator, Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Jon Ward	Director of People and Organisational Development, Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman

Future direction of the Association

At the Executive Committee meeting on 23 October 2008, it was agreed to review the role and activities of the Association and to consider what its future direction should be. A similar review was carried out five years ago, the result of which was that the Association should continue more or less as it was then. It was also agreed that this review should, in due course, include a review of the Association's rules and criteria for membership, a process originally started by the Validation Committee at the request of the Executive Committee.

It was agreed that the way forward was for some initial work to be carried out on a paid basis, and that a consultancy opportunity would therefore be advertised on the BIOA website for an initial review. Subsequently, after an open competition, Carolyn Hirst (with Professor Janette Webb) was appointed to that role. Carolyn is well known to many in BIOA as a former Deputy Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, and as a former member of 'The Ombudsman' newsletter Editorial Board and a regular contributor to it. Their remit includes to:

- review the current functions, organisation and membership structure of BIOA
- consult with members to ascertain their views on the current role and activities of BIOA, and on its future direction
- identify what lessons can be learned from other countries and similar organisations

A progress report will be given at the BIOA Conference in May 2009, with a final report due by the end of July 2009.

Membership

Membership of the Association at 31 March 2009, compared with a year ago, is as follows:

Members	Now	A year ago
Total	131	128
Voting membership	31	32
Corporate Associate membership	45	41
Individual Associate membership	55	55

New members

The Association was pleased to welcome the following new member schemes during the year:

Corporate Associate members

- Barristers Professional Conduct Tribunal, Ireland – represented by Donal O’Kelly, Secretary
- Service Complaints Commissioner for the Armed Forces – represented by Dr Susan Atkins, Commissioner
- Older People’s Commissioner for Wales – represented by Ruth Marks, Commissioner
- Beachcroft LLP, Solicitors – represented by Tony Child, Partner
- Scottish Legal Complaints Commission – represented by Eileen Masterman, Chief Executive Officer

Executive Committee

The role of the Executive Committee is to manage the Association on behalf of members. The membership of the Committee during 2008/09 has been:

Elected at the 2008 Annual Meeting:

Emily O’Reilly (Chair)	Ombudsman for Ireland
Alice Brown	Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Elizabeth France	Chief Ombudsman, tOSL (Telecommunications Ombudsman, Energy Supply Ombudsman and Surveyors Ombudsman)
Ros Gardner	Independent Complaints Mediator for the Criminal Records Bureau
Paul Kenny	Pensions Ombudsman for Ireland
Caroline Mitchell	Ombudsman, Financial Ombudsman Service

Co-opted under Rule 8(d):

Jerry White (Vice Chair)	Local Government Ombudsman for England
Suzanne McCarthy	Immigration Services Commissioner

The Secretary to the Executive Committee, and also a member of it, is **Ian Pattison** (BIOA Secretary)

Jerry White was elected Vice Chair of the Association under Rule 7(e).

The Executive Committee met five times during the year on:

- 3 July 2008
- 23 October 2008
- 11 December 2008
- 19 February 2009
- 16 April 2009

Validation Committee

The role of the Validation Committee is to advise the Executive Committee on whether applications for voting membership should be approved. The Validation Committee’s membership during 2008/09 has been:

Emily O’Reilly (Chair)	Ombudsman for Ireland BIOA Chair
Ann Abraham	UK Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman for England
Gordon Adams	Former BIOA Secretary
Mary Seneviratne	Associate Dean – Academic Legal Studies, Nottingham Law School
Helena Wiesner	Consumer Consultant
Ian Pattison (Secretary)	Secretary, British and Irish Ombudsman Association

As there were no new applications for Voting membership, the Validation Committee did not meet during this year to consider such applications. However, at the request of the Executive Committee, the Validation Committee did meet in April 2008 to advise on points to consider in carrying out a possible review of BIOA criteria for membership. It is intended to incorporate such a review into the wider review of the future direction of the Association (see above).

The Association is most grateful to the members of the Validation Committee for making themselves available as required.

The Ombudsman newsletter

The Ombudsman newsletter is produced three times a year under the supervision of an editorial board and has a circulation of around 1,500 copies. Each issue contains news items, profiles of office holders and member schemes, and a number of feature articles. During the year there have been articles on the following topics:

- Reflections from the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (by Dame Nuala O’Loan on leaving office in November 2007)
- Reflections on BIOA today (by the outgoing Chair, Tony Redmond)
- Hearing young voices (by Emily Logan, Ombudsman for Children in Ireland)
- Ombudsmen in the administrative justice landscape (by Lord Newton, Chair of the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council)
- Complaints against Ombudsman schemes: the role of the Independent Assessor (by Roger Jefferies)
- Advanced Investigative Training carried out by the Ontario Ombudsman (by Tom Morgan)
- Ten years of FOI in Ireland (by Marie O’Brien)
- ANZOA’s inaugural conference (by former BIOA Chair, Tony Redmond)
- A case for more private sector Ombudsmen (by Shelly Radice, former Removals Industry Ombudsman)
- ‘When citizens complain’ (an interview with Dr Tony Wright MP, Chair of the Public Administration Select Committee)
- Report of the ‘Hunt Review’ of the Financial Ombudsman Service (by Alison Hoyland)
- ‘Reaching out to European citizens’ (an interview with P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, European Ombudsman)

- Update on the Financial Service Ombudsman Bureau, Ireland (by Diarmuid Byrne)
- Human rights and the Ombudsman (by Nick O'Brien)
- Principles of good complaint handling (by Ann Abraham, UK Parliamentary Ombudsman and Health Service Ombudsman for England)

The membership of the Editorial Board is currently:

Emma Gray (Editor)	Communications and Outreach Manager, Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Andrew Bradley	Communications Manager, tOSL
Damian Brady	Head of External Liaison and Outreach, Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
Jackie Feeney	Head of Communications, Local Government Ombudsman
Alison Hoyland	Consumer and Parliamentary Liaison, Financial Ombudsman Service
Nick O'Brien	Legal Policy Consultant
Marie O'Brien	Investigator, Information Commissioner's Office, Ireland
Ian Pattison	Secretary, British and Irish Ombudsman Association
Rafael Runco	Deputy Housing Ombudsman

Back copies of *The Ombudsman* are available to view at or download from the Association's website (www.bioa.org.uk) or in hard-copy from the Secretary. Anybody who is interested in receiving a free personal hard-copy of the newsletter should contact the Secretary.

The BIOA website

The 'members' area' contains the notes of the various BIOA Interest and Working groups, in addition to other items of interest to BIOA members and staff of member schemes. Access details for this area can be obtained from the BIOA Secretary (secretary@bioa.org.uk). In the near future, it is expected to add details of forthcoming events and BIOA responses to consultations and requests for evidence.

The two consultancy vacancies this year (for 'accreditation' and the 'future direction review' were advertised publicly on the website.

Member schemes can, and are encouraged to, put job vacancy advertisements free of charge on the BIOA website. These can include advertisements for Council/ Board members (where applicable), the office holder and staff members. Some schemes make great use of this facility, whilst others do not. For further information, contact the BIOA Secretary.

Finances

Finances 2007/2008

The income for the year, including the surplus from the 2007 Conference of £20,515 (€25,730), was £111,819 (€140,243). Expenditure was £81,802 (€102,596), giving a total surplus for the year of £30,017 (€37,648), thereby increasing the Association's reserves to £116,384 (€145,969).

(Note: figures shown in Euros are calculated at the exchange rate on 31 March 2008 of 1.2542 Euros to the Pound Sterling.)

Finances 2008/09

The income for the year, including the surplus from the Autumn Seminar of £2,583 (€2,686), was £98,641 (€102,587). Expenditure was £109,108 (€113,472), giving a total deficit for the year of £10,467 (€10,886), thereby decreasing the Association's reserves to £105,917 (€110,154).

(Note: figures shown in Euros are calculated at the exchange rate on 31 March 2009 of 1.04 Euros to the Pound Sterling.)

Special Interest Groups

The Association has four Interest Groups which meet usually twice a year, and also a group which organises periodic seminars, including the biennial autumn seminar (formerly the Operational Management Interest Group). These Interest Groups facilitate communication between schemes and enable staff to share ideas and issues of concern, and disseminate good practice. Meetings are held at the offices of member schemes, and the Association is very grateful for those facilities being made readily available.

Those interested in joining any of the Interest Groups should contact either the respective Chairs (see below) or the BIOA Secretary (secretary@bioa.org.uk).

Operational Management Seminars Group

A steering group, chaired by Nigel Karney, the Secretary of the Commission for Local Administration in England (Local Government Ombudsman), now runs six-monthly part-day seminars on a variety of topics of interest to Ombudsmen and staff of member schemes. Two such seminars have been held very successfully during the year, as follows, with attendances of up to 70:

- May 2008 – Knowledge Management (at the Financial Ombudsman Service)
 - October 2008 – Autumn Seminar (see full report on page 5)
- As the Group will be running a Workshop (on 'information security') at the Conference in May 2009, the next seminar will not be until later in the year.

Legal Interest Group

The Legal Interest Group brings together legal advisers and those with interests in legal matters within member schemes, including some of the Ombudsmen themselves. It is chaired by John Tate, Director of Legal Services at the Independent Police Complaints Commission. Two meetings of the Group were held this year, in September 2008 at the offices in London of the Pensions Ombudsman, and in March 2009 at the offices in London (Docklands) of the Financial Ombudsman Service.

The Group will also run a Workshop on 'equality of access and the investigation of discrimination complaints' at the 2009 BIOA Conference in May.

Communications Interest Group

The Communications Interest Group brings together communications professionals and those with an interest in PR/Communications matters in member schemes. It is chaired by Sue Fox, Communications and External Relations Director at the Information Commissioner's Office. The Group met twice during the year, in September 2008 at the offices in Reading of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, and in March 2009 at the offices in Bridgend of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

The Group will also run a Workshop on 'new media and the Ombudsman' at the 2009 BIOA Conference in May. The Group has also been asked by the Executive Committee to suggest ways in which BIOA can improve its communications internally, so that more staff of member schemes are aware of it and its activities.

HR Interest Group

The HR Interest Group brings together HR professionals and those with an interest in personnel, training and development in member schemes. It is chaired by Peter Stansfield, HR Director at the Financial Ombudsman Service. The Group met twice during the year, in September 2008 at the offices in Reading of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, and in March 2009 at the offices in Bridgend of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

The Group will also run a Workshop on 'stakeholder consultations – a level for change?' at the 2009 BIOA Conference in May.

First Contact Interest Group

This relatively new First Contact Interest Group brings together those concerned with, and with an interest in, 'gateway' services within member schemes, and dealing with complaints and enquiries when they are first received. It is chaired by Carol Neill, Outreach Team Leader with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Group met twice during the year, in May 2008 at the offices in London (Docklands) of the Financial Ombudsman Service, and in November 2008 at the offices in Edinburgh of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

The Group will also run a Workshop on 'managing customer expectations' at the 2009 BIOA Conference in May.

Members of the Association at 31 March 2009

Voting (full) member schemes

Bermuda Ombudsman
Energy Ombudsman
Estate Agents Ombudsman
Financial Ombudsman Service, UK
Financial Services Ombudsman Bureau, Ireland
Financial Services Ombudsman, Isle of Man
Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission
Gibraltar Public Services Ombudsman
Housing Ombudsman Service
Independent Police Complaints Commission
Legal Services Ombudsman, England and Wales
Local Government Ombudsmen, England
Northern Ireland Ombudsman
Ombudsman and Information Commissioner for Ireland
Ombudsman for the Defence Forces, Ireland
Otelio (Telecommunications Ombudsman)
Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman
Pensions Ombudsman
Pensions Ombudsman of Ireland
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Removals Industry Ombudsman
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Surveyors Ombudsman Service
The Equality Tribunal, Ireland
Waterways Ombudsman

Associate member schemes

Consumer and Professional Organisations

Beachcroft LLP, Solicitors
Citizens Advice
(National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux)
Consumer Focus Scotland

Complaint-Handling Bodies

Adjudicator, Revenue and Customs, Valuation Office Agency,
Public Guardianship Office, and the Insolvency Service
Advertising Standards Authority
An Coimisinéir Teanga (Irish Language Commissioner)
Barristers Professional Conduct Tribunal, Ireland
Commissioner for Public Appointments
Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland
Complaints Commissioner to the Bar Standards Board
Criminal Records Bureau
Furniture Ombudsman
Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission
Greffier of the States of Jersey
IDRS Limited
Immigration Services Commissioner

Independent Case Examiner for DWP
Independent Complaints Reviewer, Audit Commission,
HM Land Registry, Land Registers NI,
National Archives, Charity Commission,
Housing Corporation and Youth Justice Agency
Independent Review Service for the Social Fund
Information Commissioner
Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland
Judicial Appointments & Conduct Ombudsman
Law Society of Ireland
Law Society of Scotland
Lay Observer for Northern Ireland
Legal Complaints Service
(Law Society of England and Wales)
Lottery Forum
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Ombudsman
Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Ombudsman for Children, Ireland
Ombudsman for Gibraltar
Press Ombudsman, Ireland
Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for England and Wales
Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority,
Northern Ireland
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Scottish Information Commissioner
Scottish Legal Complaints Commission
Scottish Parliamentary Standards Commissioner
Scottish Prisons Complaints Commissioner
Service Complaints Commissioner for the Armed Forces
Standards Board for England
The Dispute Service Limited



**British and Irish
Ombudsman Association**

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