A strong gathering of IHEEM members, senior representatives from London livery companies, construction companies, architects, consulting engineers, and equipment suppliers, a number attending on behalf of Company Affiliates, gathered in Westminster on the evening of 18 November to hear the Institute’s new President, Chris Northey, give his inaugural Presidential Address. Speaking in the Manufacturing Room at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, he described the development of his own career as a professional engineer, and outlined his thoughts on IHEEM’s key short-to-medium term priorities, as he saw them. The evening also saw the presentation of a number of the IHEEM Awards for 2014. HEJ editor, Jonathan Baillie, reports.

Chris Northey, who began his engineering career when he joined his father’s family plumbing and heating company in Cornwall in 1987, and has subsequently gained wide-ranging experience with companies including Oscar Faber, Zisman Bower & Partners, and Chapman BDSP, is a highly experienced public health services engineer with a BEng (Hons) in Building Services Engineering Design & Management. A Chartered Engineer, and a member of IHEEM since 2004, his current-day role is associate, team leader, of ChapmanBDSP’s Public Health Engineering Division, based in London.

The winner of a number of industry awards, including the 2011 Prince Philip City & Guilds Medal – which he received from the Duke of Edinburgh himself in May 2011 – Chris Northey is also an avowed champion of good building services engineering design. He officially took over as IHEEM’s President from Greg Markham at the Institute’s 2014 AGM at October’s Healthcare Estates 2014 show (the October 2014 HEJ incorporated a full profile).

Sponsors thanked
Before Chris Northey’s address, IHEEM CEO, Julian Amey, welcomed the assembled guests, who included representatives from IHEEM Company Affiliates and from the Institute’s London Branch Committee, and individual Institute members. He also thanked the sponsors of the 2014 IHEEM Awards to be presented later in the evening – Spirax Sarco, Trend Controls, Turner Facilities Management, and Cynergine, for their support. In a brief pre-amble, Julian Amey said he believed Chris Northey brought ‘a wealth of talent’ to the role; having graduated with a BEng (Hons) from Reading University in 1996, he had achieved Chartered Engineer status just 10 years later. He added: “In 2011 Chris Northey was awarded the City & Guilds Prince Philip Medal – selected by the Duke of Edinburgh himself – for the outstanding leadership, ability, and enthusiasm, he had shown throughout his career in the engineering industry. He has forged his career in some of the country’s leading engineering consultancies.

Battersea project
“As well as being involved in the public services engineering for the redevelopment of Battersea Power Station at ChapmanBDSP,” Julian Amey continued, “he finds time to act as a volunteer for CIBSE, The Society of Public Health Engineers (SoPHE), Summit Skills, on Livery Companies, and now as President of IHEEM. I now invite him to give his President’s Address.”

Chris Northey began his presentation by welcoming the guests, and said he was ‘extremely pleased and honoured’ to be IHEEM’s new President. He paid tribute to Greg Markham, whose ‘stunning work’ over the previous two years he said had given him ‘an excellent platform to build upon’. He told guests: “This is a very special moment for me, and I will use all my dedication and commitment in promoting the Institute further over the next two years.”

IHEEM’s continued success would, he believed, depend on the continuance of...
One of the highlights of 2015, he explained, would be the publication of the Engineering and Healthcare report – co-produced by IHEEM, IPEM, and CIBSE

Involvement with other institutions

Chris Northey was optimistic that his own involvement with other institutions, including CIBSE, SoPHE, CIPHE, Summit Skills, and the Worshipful Company of Plumbers, would help ‘further reinforce’ IHEEM’s presence within the healthcare sector. He said: “I am very proud to report to you tonight on a number of successful recent partnerships, for example with the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine (IPEM), and the Royal Academy of Engineering.”

Importance of IHEEM’s ‘regions’

He said: “One of my other key priorities will be for us to better support the IHEEM regions, which are key in promoting the Institute within, and outside, the UK. The regions are what make the Institute what it is today.” He had recently attended the successful re-launch, and first technical meeting, of IHEEM’s Republic of Ireland Branch in Dublin (HEJ – November 2014). He said: “I hope that, by having face-to-face meetings with the regions, I will be able to give personal pledges of support to local members, and ‘feed back to headquarters’ on specific requirements from the Branches.”

Acknowledging that IHEEM ‘relied hugely’ on the continued support of others for success, Chris Northey said he was keen to thank and pay tribute to all the steering committees and supporters of IHEEM ‘for all their hard work and dedication in developing the Institute’s activities on an ongoing basis’. He added: “I am also keen that our Company Affiliates continue their valuable support of IHEEM and its various regions, an important goal in terms particularly of the knowledge transfer that is right at the heart of our activities.”

Attracting young talent

His next focus was the importance of both attracting to the sector, and building up the skills and expertise of, young engineers. Having himself ‘come up through the ranks’ of an approved apprenticeship and technician training, Chris Northey ‘knew personally’ of the importance of appropriate industry-supported training schemes. He said: “Encouraging young people into our profession, and giving them opportunities, must be one of our key objectives.

We have the technical knowledge and experience as healthcare engineers, and it is up to us to ensure a continued transfer of this knowledge to the next generation.”

IHEEM would, in particular, he said, be working with the Engineering Council and Engineering UK to promote the ‘Tomorrow’s Engineers’ and ‘Big Bang’ campaigns, while he was also keen to encourage young people’s studies in engineering. Among the ways IHEEM would do this would be by building partnerships with the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers, and the Worshipful Company of Plumbers; representatives of both Livery Companies were in attendance. Chris Northey said: “These are just two of the ways IHEEM is supporting our industry. We will be able to inform you of other initiatives during my Presidential term.”

He continued: “One of my other aims is to increase and broaden our membership base. IHEEM certainly has a strong membership, but, with more members, our voice within the industry will increase, while members will gain from being part of a leading, forward-thinking institution.

“I believe a lot of potential members out there are unaware that there is a place for them within the Institute. We must find ways to ensure that these individuals are brought into membership at an appropriate grade.”

Technical knowledge base

Chris Northey argued that that one of IHEEM’s key strengths, and a major membership benefit, was the Institute’s technical knowledge base and ‘heritage of knowledge’ – dating back many years – which could be harnessed both within the UK, and by healthcare engineering and estate management organisations overseas. “Our developing technical excellence has led to a major planned initiative in 2015 – the formation of IHEEM Ltd,” he explained. “This new company’s overall purpose will be to ‘own’ and update all of the HTMs and HBNS under the IHEEM remit. We are currently at the start of IHEEM’s engagement in updating technical guidance, and this will continue during 2015. IHEEM already has a large number of Technical Platforms, which are already giving technical feedback on all the HTMs and HBNS currently under review.”

Record attendance

Chris Northey had been pleased to see another successful annual IHEEM conference, exhibition, and dinner, in October, with a record number of conference delegations and dinners, while with last July’s appointment of Chris Blower as events and marketing manager, the Institute was looking forward to developing comprehensive regional events for a technical programme in 2015, in conjunction with the IHEEM Branches. He said: “My view is that knowledge drives demand, and I am sure the IHEEM Technical Platforms under the ‘IHEEM Limited’ set-up will raise the Institute’s profile even further.”

While the UK was key for IHEEM, Chris Northey stressed the importance of the ‘international market’. He said: “IHEEM is growing internationally, as well as in the UK. In addition to Ireland, the Institute is building on its strengths overseas, for example in Hong Kong, and I am keen to develop its profile and activities in Asia and other parts of the Middle East.”

As part of this initiative, he would be visiting the Hong Kong Branch during 2015. He said: “Our Hong Kong members have been very supportive over the years, and I look forward to meeting them. Following IHEEM’s participation in the
recent International Federation of Hospital Engineering (IFHE) 2014 Congress in Buenos Aires, we will also be strengthening our bilateral relations with Brazil, Australia, and Canada, as well as with other leading countries within Europe.”

A ‘strong invitation’
He next told guests: “As we celebrate our recent successes this evening, we want to send a strong invitation to all our supporters present to join us in ensuring we play our full part in meeting the demanding challenges of ‘doing more with less’, and reducing carbon emissions – two challenges which face the healthcare industry both in the UK, and worldwide.

‘Achieving such targets will require a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, and, with the recent economic upturn, I am pleased to see an increase in investment in training. This is extremely important for the next generation of hospital engineers. Providing excellent healthcare engineering is our greatest asset, and I look forward on IHEEM’s behalf to delivering this challenge to industry during my Presidential Term.’ At this point he concluded his presentation, and invited questions. Subjects raised ranged from how Chris Northey envisaged the Institute could best continue working with other professional engineering institutes and organisations to ‘cross-fertilise knowledge’, and derive mutual benefits, to attracting more young engineers. Also discussed was the potential for IHEEM to further develop its contacts, relationships, and activities, in fast-developing countries such as India and China, and to work closely with non-estates personnel – such as clinicians – in both the UK and overseas, particularly when new guidance was formulated, to ensure that it reflected a broad spectrum of views.

Awards presented
After the President’s address and questions, a number of IHEEM 2014 Awards not presented at the Healthcare Estates Conference 2014 last October were given to the winners.

The first to be presented was the Northcroft Silver Medal, sponsored by Spirax Sarco. The Medal goes annually to the author of the technical paper published in Health Estate Journal considered to have contributed most to the advancement of healthcare engineering. Lionel G Northcroft, in whose honour the award is given, joined Spirax Manufacturing Company as sales manager in 1932, subsequently becoming managing director, and then chairman, of Spirax Sarco Engineering Ltd. He was also President of the Institute of Hospital Engineering from 1967 to 1969 and, throughout his career, always encouraged engineers to promote and publish their work.

TB in Swaziland
This year’s winning article, ‘Infection in a developing world’, published in the November 2013 issue of HEJ, saw the winner, specialist physician in infectious disease, James Elston, describe how he and a small team of colleagues worked closely with UK architects and healthcare engineers to help radically improve Swaziland’s TB inpatient facilities. The judges said the article had received ‘high acclaim for its interest and relevance regarding infection control’. It was co-authored by James Elston, John Wall, professor in International Health at the Nuffield Centre for International Health at the University of Leeds, and Clare Humphreys, speciality registrar in Public Health, Yorkshire.

After receiving the Award from Graham Dear, marketing and project manager at Spirax Sarco, James Elston thanked the Institute and the Awards selection committee, as well as HEJ for publishing the article, adding that winning the Award was ‘a completely unexpected honour’, particularly as, rather than being a healthcare engineer, he was a ‘medic’. He was, he said, here on behalf of the whole team, which also included Ian Hinnitt and Steve Batson. He added: “We came together as a team in response to quite a critical situation on the ground, and, speaking personally as a physician and public health practitioner I would say that we initially faced a situation fairly close to panic for all the healthcare staff in Swaziland. To work with technical experts like Ian and Steve was eye-opening, and what we achieved really did make a difference there.

Remote working’s success
“I think what we proved was that the remote working between UK-based technical experts and our practitioners in the ground could work. It was actually straightforward, and we demonstrated some good innovation. When we were looking to publish this work, as a medical person one is perhaps naturally drawn towards medical literature. However this really wasn’t an academic exercise. It was about trying to improve awareness, get people engaged, and reach those people that make a difference and carry the baton forward. We were therefore really grateful when Jonathan Baillie of HEJ was interested and helped produce this article. The situation in Africa is steadily getting
worse, and multi-drug resistant TB is becoming more of a problem; consequently the facilities we helped to improve are already becoming overwhelmed again. You do hear a lot about the need for healthcare workers in Africa, but what is really lacking is healthcare engineers, and that technical expertise that people in this room and reading Health Estate Journal have. Thus we are really grateful to IHEEM for this award, which will hopefully raise awareness."

Efforts to promote the Institute
The next award – one of two Lucas Scholarship Awards for 2014, was presented by Paul Willett, business development manager at category sponsor, Trend Controls. Before giving it to the winner, Graham Jones, Paul Willett explained that the Award was created in the mid-1980s in recognition of Bernard Lucas’ efforts for the Institute, and to encourage up to two young members to participate in events such as the Annual Conference at no cost. He said: “This year’s (first) winner is an outstanding individual who has for many years worked promoting the Institute and the profession of healthcare engineering across the UK. He is the Wales Branch chairman, and has never sought any personal recognition for his efforts, working tirelessly arranging events and meetings.”

Dedicated member for over 25 years
The second Lucas Scholarship Award, sponsored by Turner Facilities Management for 2014, and, like the first, given for ‘significant contribution to the work and promotion of the Institute or to the healthcare engineering and estate management profession’, was presented by Richard Fee, business development at Turner Facilities Management, to Alan Gascoine. Richard Fee explained: ‘Alan Gascoine has served IHEEM as a dedicated member for over 25 years, in the roles of Branch Treasurer, Secretary, and, most recently, as chairperson for the London and South East Branch. He is further committed as a member to the national Council, and has made a significant contribution to helping those members wishing to develop their careers through academic advancement through the Institute.’

Excellence in education and training
Presenting the next award, the John Bolton Memorial, sponsored by Cynergin, was the company’s managing director, Nick Ray. He explained that the Award is presented annually for excellence in education and training, and commemorates the life of John Bolton, the Institute’s President from 1985 to 1986. John Bolton spent the majority of his life in the National Health Service, and had ‘a long-standing connection with the Institute, regularly featuring in the annual Conference and Dinner.’

Nick Ray said: “This year’s winner, Geoff Dillow, joined the NHS in 1978 in the medical physics department, and went on to join Eastwood Park in the 1980s as a lecturer specialising in medical gases. He also worked in York’s Regional Health Authority, before returning to Eastwood Park as head of the Medical Department. He then progressed in his role to become the head of training, but later retired due to health reasons in 1996. He is held in high regard for his work and contribution to the industry, and is very well respected. With Geoff Dillow unable to attend, the Award was received on his behalf by Mike Arrowsmith, HEJ’s technical editor.

Lifetime achievement celebrated
The final Award to be presented, the IHEEM Lifetime Achievement Award, goes annually to an individual who has given long service to the healthcare industry, either within the NHS, or in the private sector, and has made a significant contribution to their particular specialist field.

Presenting the 2014 Award to Alex Black, Chris Northey explained that, following over 45 years of working within the NHS, the winner had announced his retirement. He said: “In terms of background, Alex Black completed a scientific instrument-maker apprenticeship in 1953 with Kelvin & Hughes, before a period in national service with the British Army in Egypt. On leaving national service, he worked as a sales and controls engineer with the John Thompson Group, and as area manager with Drayton Castle, before joining the Western Regional Hospital Board in 1969 as regional sterilising engineer.

“He retired from the health service in 1994, but returned to join WS Atkins to re-establish the role of the Authorising Engineer in Scotland. During that period he also acted as the MOD Authorising Engineer in Northern Ireland, and was instrumental in the development of the Safety Rules and Procedures MOD Document SRP 09. His services were also required at the UN Hospital in Palestine, necessitating regular visits over a nine-month period before problems of design and installation could be resolved.

An invaluable contribution
“One joining IHEEM, he was accepted as a Fellow and Incorporated Engineer, later being granted Chartered status. His contribution over the last 45 years has been invaluable to medical gases in the health service. The high standards he expected of ‘his’ Authorised Persons in Scotland and further afield are well known, and still hold true today. His expertise and knowledge may never be repeated. On behalf of the IHEEM, I congratulate this individual’s contribution to the NHS and the medical gas industry.”