



British and Irish
Ombudsman Association

Annual Report 2010–2011

2009–2010

2008–2009

2007–2008

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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 British Crown Dependencies
 - the British Overseas Territories
- to facilitate mutual learning between schemes and to provide services to members designed to develop best practice
- to work to raise the profile of Ombudsmen and understanding of their work with key influencers and the wider public in ways which add value to the promotional work of individual Ombudsman schemes

Foreword by the Chair of the Association

There is a truism often employed in opening annual reports regarding the times of great change in which we live; so often utilised in fact that it probably deserves to be regarded as cliché. Despite the temptation to seek a more original note upon which to begin a reflection on the year, I'm afraid that I cannot avoid the well-trodden path.

The changes in the UK being brought about by the new Government are profound. Whereas here it is useful to dwell on the impact on BIOA members, some of whom will see major change and some of whom will cease to be, the wider impact of cuts and structural change, such as those planned for the health service in England, will have major implications for BIOA members for years to come. The UK devolved administrations will all have seen elections by the time of the Annual Meeting and this will undoubtedly bring its own challenges.

In the Republic of Ireland, the extreme financial challenges caused by the "bail out", the changes

following the austerity measures which will continue, and the potential for further legislation for the national Ombudsman all contribute to an ever-changing environment in which member schemes operate. Against this background the Association has sought to raise its profile as the body which promotes and protects the Ombudsman institution in the UK and the Republic of Ireland and this will inevitably form a key aspect of our work in the year ahead.

My first year as Chair has seen a great deal of activity, much of it being increased contact with the UK government and departments to make representations regarding Government policies impacting, intentionally or otherwise, on Ombudsmen and other members. The other principal activities of the Association during the past 12 months have been:

- The Annual Meeting and Association Dinner in Cardiff in May 2010
- The commissioning of a profile-raising and communications report
- The successful approval of two external training providers to carry out BIOA-approved accredited case handler training
- The review of the Association's Criteria (for membership) and Rules
- A seminar held in London in November 2010
- The 9th biennial Conference being held at a new venue in Loughborough in May 2011

All of these activities are described in more detail within this Annual Report. In addition, the Association's normal activities have continued, including supporting the regular Interest Group meetings (including a new Research Interest Group) and publishing the BIOA newsletter 'The Ombudsman'. These activities can only take place because of the invaluable contributions of member schemes and volunteer staff members, who give their time willingly alongside their normal 'day jobs' to act variously as Chairs of Interest Groups, Editor and members of the Editorial Board of the newsletter, and participating attendees at meetings. The Association is most grateful once again to everyone involved for assisting the Secretary in keeping these valuable and popular activities going. I am particularly grateful to Emma Gray, as she steps down after four years as Editor of 'The Ombudsman'.

The two Working Groups of the Association (Governance and Accreditation) have now come to the end of their fairly long lives, and are reported on later. I would like once again to thank the respective Chairs, Paul Kenny and Ros Gardner, and all of the members of both Groups for their energy in producing such valuable outcomes. Also, as reported later, the Sub-Group of the Validation Committee, led by Ann Abraham, has produced its report which has resulted in



recommendations to the Annual Meeting on various changes to membership categories and subsequent changes to the Rules and Criteria.

The forthcoming year should be an interesting one for BIOA. Not only can we look forward to continuing and increasing dialogue with the UK government and those departments likely to be concerned with Ombudsmen, but the new government in the Republic of Ireland could give an opportunity for similar dialogue and influence there, should the BIOA members wish to see such a development. We also hope to make more contact with the devolved administrations of the UK, again if members so desire, during the next year or so. A change of ('trading') name of the Association, probably to 'The Ombudsman Association' may help with this activity outside of the purely British (Westminster) context. Additionally, we expect to increase the Association's profile and communication with stakeholders, including government, advice agencies and the public, through a new and improved website with better signposting to member schemes.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention two specific 'big players' in the Ombudsman community, both stalwart supporters of the Association. First, Sir Tony Redmond, who retired as the Chair of the Commission for Local Administration for England (Local Government Ombudsman) in November 2010 and who was BIOA Chair from 2006 to 2008. Secondly, Ann Abraham, the UK Parliamentary Ombudsman and Health Service Ombudsman for England, BIOA Chair from 2004 to 2006, and who has announced her retirement as Ombudsman from the end of this year. I would like publicly to thank them both for the enormous contributions they have each made to BIOA, and indeed to the world of ombudsmanry over the years.

I would also like to thank my fellow members of the Executive Committee for their hard work and valued support in guiding and directing the Association, and to the Validation Committee for its advice and counsel. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to our Secretary, Ian Pattison, whose work underpins all of our endeavours and who has provided exemplary support to me as Chair.

Peter Tyndall
BIOA Chair
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
April 2011

Annual Meeting 2010

The 2010 Annual Meeting of the Association was held on 13 and 14 May in Cardiff, co-hosted by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). It consisted of three separate events, namely:

- Workshops (a 'fringe' event) run by the PSOW during the afternoon of Thursday, 13 May at the Parc Thistle Hotel in Cardiff
- The Association Dinner held during the evening of 13 May in the Grand Hall of the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff
- The 17th Annual Meeting of the Association held during the morning of Friday, 14 May in the Reardon Smith Theatre at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff

Workshops on 13 May 2010

Three workshops were arranged by PSOW for staff of member schemes during the afternoon of 13 May, following a pattern set in Edinburgh at the 2008 Annual Meeting. Participants selected one of the workshops to attend, which were:

- Administrative Law Reform – an opportunity to discuss the Law Commission's view of the next steps in reforming the administrative justice system, particularly as it affects Ombudsmen. (Led by Frances Patterson QC, Public Law Commissioner)
- Managing Expectations – a discussion on the different approaches taken to first contact and managing complainants' expectations. (Led by Carl Gehler, Investigations Manager PSOW)
- Redress – a consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of the range of approaches taken to providing redress. (Led by Greg Phillips, Senior Investigator PSOW)

Each of the workshops attracted a higher level of attendance than originally expected and in total some 90 staff members of BIOA member schemes were present.

(Note: a fuller report of the workshops is in the 'members' area' of the BIOA website.)

Association Dinner on 13 May 2010

Some 110 members of the Association, staff of member schemes and guests attended the Association Dinner in the very grand setting of the Grand Hall of the Museum. The National Museum of Wales was founded in 1907, when it inherited the collection of the Cardiff Museum, which shared the building of Cardiff Central Library. Construction of the present building in the civic complex of Cathays Park began in 1912, but owing to the First World War it did not open to the public until 1927. The architects were Arnold Dunbar Smith and Cecil Brewer and, although the building as it now stands is a heavily truncated version of their design, it is nevertheless a magnificent and impressive setting for the Dinner.

During the drinks reception before the Dinner, guests were able to visit some of the Museum's galleries. At the beginning of the Dinner, an address and welcome was given in Welsh (simultaneously translated into English) by Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales. Before and after the event, guests

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were entertained by the Taff Male Voice Choir, National Eisteddford winners in 2008 and chosen to sing at two international rugby matches in the Millennium Stadium during 2009. The Choir had also been selected to sing at the Royal Albert Hall in London later in 2010 in the '1,000 Male Voices Festival'.

Annual Meeting on 14 May 2010

This was held in the Reardon Smith Theatre at the National Museum of Wales. The 17th Annual Meeting (the formal business of the Association) took place first, followed by three presentations. Some 120 people attended this event. During this first session the BIOA Chair, Emily O'Reilly, gave an address and the new Executive Committee was also voted in, as follows:

BIOA Chair:	Peter Tyndall , Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Representing Members:	Christopher Hamer , The Property Ombudsman Jane Hingston , Lead Ombudsman, UK Financial Ombudsman Service Tony King , UK Pensions Ombudsman
Representing Members from the Republic of Ireland:	Paul Kenny , Pensions Ombudsman for Ireland
Representing Associate Members:	Ros Gardner , Individual Associate member Suzanne McCarthy , Immigration Services Commissioner

At the Annual Meeting, a resolution to expand the Executive Committee was approved, thereby creating additional vacancies which were filled by co-option at the Executive Committee meeting held on 24 June, as follows:

Representing Members:	Jane Martin , Acting Chair of the Commission for Local Administration in England (Local Government Ombudsman) Bill Richardson , Deputy Chief Executive, UK Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman for England
Representing members from the Republic of Ireland:	Carmel Foley , Garda Síochána Commissioner, Ombudsman Commission

The BIOA Secretary, Ian Pattison, is also a member of the Executive Committee.

(Note: The minutes of the Annual Meeting, including the Chair's address, are in the 'members' area' of the BIOA website. Further details of Executive Committee members, including photographs, are in the public area of the BIOA website.)

Presentations

Three presentations followed the formal business of the Association, around the theme of 'learning from complainants'. Ombudsmen and complaints handlers almost always highlight two aspects of their work, investigating complaints to obtain redress for service users where appropriate, and making sure that services improve through systematically learning from complaints. The three speakers in Cardiff gave distinctive and perceptive presentations on how we can learn from complaints, and from the experience

of complainants. With much talk of being customer focused or citizen centred, are we making the most of the experiences of a very particular group of people, those who have not been happy with the outcome of their interaction, to sharpen up the way we do business?

The speakers were:

- **Dame Gillian Morgan** has been a GP and a Senior Health Administrator. As Chief Executive of the English Health Confederation, she was very involved in the reforms of the health complaints system in England which has led to a significant enhancement of the role of the English Health Service Ombudsman. She is now Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Assembly Government, but her presentation gave her view of the problems that arise when services don't respond to the concerns of their individual users, and instead respond in a depersonalised way which contributes to a lack of trust and poor perception of the care offered. She explained how that perspective informed her approach to promoting learning from complaints across the public sector.
 - **Peter Griffiths** is the Chief Executive of Wales's largest indigenous financial institution, the Principality Building Society. Unlike many others, it has retained its mutual status and is answerable to its customers as proprietors, and not to a group of shareholders. Peter spoke about how this has shaped their attitude to complaints, and how being close to their customers has helped them to remain successful while others fail.
 - **Jorrit de Jong** is a Harvard academic and a member of the Kafka Brigade, a unique Dutch organisation dedicated to improving services by getting the leaders of organisations to listen to their customers, not in an abstract or academic way, but face to face. The Brigade has worked with the Ombudsman in Holland, and also with Government and public bodies in Wales. Kafka wrote about the strangling and depersonalising effect of bureaucracy. The Kafka Brigade work to remind us that people using services often have lots to say about improving them, if only we'd listen.
- Tom Frawley, Northern Ireland Ombudsman and also Vice-President, Europe of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) also spoke at the meeting, giving an overview of the Institute. He also outlined the IOI's forthcoming programme and proposals, which included better communication with members and building relationships with other relevant organisations, such as BIOA. Finally, he mentioned the IOI European Conference which was to be held in Barcelona on 3-6 October 2010.

Autumn Seminar 2010

The BIOA Autumn Seminar was held on Monday, 15 November at the offices of Winckworth Sherwood, Solicitors in London. We are most grateful to Simon Randall (Consultant) and the partners of Winckworth Sherwood for the use of their premises with its most attractive location directly on the south bank of the Thames at Southwark Cathedral.

Around 80 people attended the Seminar, representing some 27 member schemes, as well as several individual members.

The two topics discussed, and the speakers involved, were:

Morning session:

'The use of associates, contractors and shared services staff to undertake/assist with investigations'

Chair: **Peter Tyndall**, Welsh Public Services Ombudsman (BIOA Chair)

Speakers: **Nigel Karney**, Secretary of the Commission for Local Administration in England
Chris Bottomley, Independent HR Consultant
Robbie Allcock, Senior Investigation Officer, Ombudsman Services
Sara Fenoughty, Head of Technical & Policy Support, Legal Complaints Service
Leslie Gunde, Head of Business Support Services, Legal Complaints Service
Matthew Dunne, Foot Anstey, Solicitors

Afternoon session:

'Dealing with challenging, difficult or unreasonably persistent behaviour from complainants'

Chair: **Tony King**, UK Pensions Ombudsman

Speakers: **Alice Hanscomb**, Independent Consultant (on behalf of The Helplines Association)
Carolyn Hirst, Independent Consultant (formerly Deputy Scottish Public Services Ombudsman)
Caroline Wells, Head of Outreach & External Liaison, Financial Ombudsman Service
Jonathan Moran, Samaritans

(Note: Copies of the presentations are in the 'members' area' of the BIOA website, available to BIOA members and staff of member schemes.)

Annual Meeting 2011

The 18th Annual Meeting of the Association takes place at 11.30am on Thursday, 12 May at Burleigh Court Conference Centre, Loughborough University, before the start of the 2011 Biennial Conference

Biennial Conference 2011

The 9th Biennial Conference of the Association will be held on 12/13 May 2011 at Burleigh Court, part of the Imago conference facilities owned and operated by Loughborough University.

Opened in late 2006, Burleigh Court offers excellent conference facilities including 225 high-quality (4 star) en suite bedrooms, a 240 capacity Convention Room and leisure club and spa complex. Loughborough is in an excellent central location, and well served by flights from Dublin and Edinburgh to Nottingham East Midlands Airport, by a good train service from London and by road via the M1.

Following on from the success of the last two conferences in 2007 and 2009 which attracted 200 and 180 delegates respectively, it is hoped that, despite the difficult economic times, there will once again be a good attendance at this event. The Association has initially committed to only 125 places, but with the option to take more places should numbers warrant it (which hopefully they will!).

The Conference will be based around the overall theme of Ombudsmen in a climate of change and will revert back to the original format of plenary sessions and workshops, although this time each of the six (only) workshops will be run twice.

The programme will consist of:

Plenary sessions:

- Challenges to decisions
- Ombudsmen: leaders or followers?
- Better public accountability
- Going forward with administrative justice
- How to be an Ombudsman in a new climate

Workshops:

- 'BIOA approved' accredited training
- Managing complainant expectations
- Maintaining confidentiality in a climate of change (including FOI)
- Maintaining objectivity and avoiding case hardening
- Tools for wider learning (eg how to improve practice in bodies under jurisdiction)
- Digital communications and new media

(Note: a full report of this 2011 Conference will be in the August 2011 issue of 'The Ombudsman' newsletter, as well as in next year's Annual report. Copies of the presentations will be available in due course in the 'members' area' of the BIOA website.)

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Annual Meeting 2012

An Association Dinner and the 19th Annual Meeting of the Association will to be held in Belfast, respectively at Belfast City Hall on 17 May 2012 and in the 'Baby Grand' auditorium of the Grand Opera House on 18 May 2012.

External Relations

Interface with governments

The Association has stepped up its dialogue with the UK Government about Ombudsman issues. Periodic meetings continue to be held with representatives of the Cabinet Office.

At these meetings, BIOA is represented by the Chair and the Secretary, together with the UK Parliamentary Ombudsman. Meetings have also been held with officials from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).

One small, but nevertheless important, success earlier this year was the successful lobbying of BIS to call its grocery supply-chain arbitration scheme (to monitor the supply Code of Conduct established for supermarkets) the 'Groceries Code Adjudicator', rather than the previously preferred (by ministers and picked up by the Media), but wholly inappropriate, 'Supermarkets Ombudsman'.

A meeting was also held in January with officials from CLG about the implications of the Localism Bill. This Bill includes the proposal to impose a 'democratic filter' restricting access to the Housing Ombudsman which BIOA is opposed to in principle, as well as the potential introduction of binding powers for both the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman which are seen generally within the public services Ombudsman community as unnecessary and unwelcome for a variety of reasons. The Secretary of State and the Minister for Housing and Local Government have been written to about these points. In addition, The Association has also provided written evidence to the House of Commons Localism Bill Committee.

BIOA has continued to seek to raise the profile of Ombudsmen with the UK Government and to bring to its attention significant issues. A meeting was held in February with Sir Gus O'Donnell, the Cabinet Secretary, about the Public Bodies Bill as well as more general concerns, particularly to do with implications for independence of Ombudsmen. The Association received a sympathetic hearing and useful ideas were exchanged.

Responding to consultations

During the year, the Association has formally responded to the following issues, consultation papers and reports:

- Northern Ireland Assembly Consultation Paper: Proposals to update legislation to reform the office of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman
- Law Commission Consultation Paper No 196: Public Services Ombudsmen
- Administrative Justice & Tribunals Council Consultation: Principles for Administrative Justice – the AJTC's Approach
- The Law Society: Access to Justice Review

- Written evidence to the Localism Bill Committee of the House of Commons

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 (full) 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'.

The Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council

The Association has a long history of consultation and co-operation with the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council (AJTC), and its predecessor body, the Council on Tribunals (CoT) and therefore particularly regrets the Coalition's intention to abolish it (contained in the Public Bodies Bill), probably in early 2012. This will leave a significant gap in the strategic oversight of Administrative Justice, including Ombudsmen, and the Association is seeking clarification from the Ministry of Justice of how this gap will be filled.

Current Work Programme

Governance

The 'Governance' Working Group, with Paul Kenny (Pensions Ombudsman for Ireland) as Chair, completed its main work last year with the publication in October 2009 of the BIOA 'Guide to principles of good governance'. This can be viewed or downloaded from the BIOA website (under 'BIOA publications'). Printed copies are available free from the Secretary (secretary@bioa.org.uk).

The Working Group continued during this year to develop additional governance material for the BIOA website and has now been formally been 'disbanded', having completed its work. The Association is particularly grateful for the work the Group achieved, particularly for the 'Guide' which is a very useful tool to be used by new and existing members against which to measure their own governance arrangements. It will also be used by the Validation Committee is assessing applications for (full) membership.

Members of the Working Group were:

Mike Biles	Housing Ombudsman
Christopher Hamer	The Property Ombudsman
Paul Kenny (Chair)	Pensions Ombudsman for Ireland
Mick King	Deputy Local Government Ombudsman for England
Ian Pattison (Secretary)	BIOA Secretary
Mike Reddy	Independent Consultant
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, set up by the BIOA Executive Committee during 2007, continued to meet during this year, with Ros Gardner as Chair. Working with Nick O'Brien, the consultant appointed to progress this project, the Working Group has now completed its task of developing training for case handlers of BIOA member schemes, working with approved providers. The Group has been formally 'disbanded' in its original form, although a new and smaller Group, to be called the 'Training Approval Group', is currently being set up to approve new training providers and to monitor existing arrangements. Ros Gardner will initially chair this group.

Two training suppliers have so far been approved, namely Queen Margaret University (QMU), Edinburgh (which carried out the initial pilot training courses in 2009/10) and Bond Solon, although that approval of the latter is subject to the satisfactory setting up of EDEXCEL accreditation. QMU is planning courses in London and Warrington during the summer and winter of this year respectively.

The Association is very grateful to the 'Accreditation' Working Group for the excellent work it has done and the results it achieved.

Group members during the year have included:

Kerryn Ashton	Senior HR Advisor, 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
Maureen Kelly	Head of Personnel, Local Government Ombudsman
Niki Maclean	Head of Services, Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Fiona McCarney	Training Officer, Ombudsman for Ireland
Suzanne McCarthy	Immigration Services Commissioner
Mike McMahon	Training Manager, Financial Ombudsman Service
David Moorehead	HR Manager, Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Nick O'Brien	Consultant
Ian Pattison (Secretary)	Secretary, British and Irish Ombudsman Association
Susanna Reece	Deputy Adjudicator, Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Jon Ward	Director of People and Organisational Development, Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman

Review of Criteria and Rules

At the beginning of the year the Executive Committee reconfirmed its request to the Validation Committee to review the Association's Criteria (for membership) and Rules. This was a review originally started during 2008, but put on hold temporarily pending the wider 'Future Direction' Review carried out during 2009.

A Sub-Group of the Validation Committee was set up, chaired by Ann Abraham, to make initial recommendations to the full Validation Committee and then to the Executive Committee.

These recommendations, approved by the Executive Committee of the Association and after full consultation during March with members, will be put to the membership at the Annual Meeting on 12 May. They include:

- The expansion of membership categories from two to three, namely:
 - Ombudsmen Members (current Members/formerly Voting members)
 - Complaint Handler Members (primarily current Corporate Associate Members in the 'Complaint Handling Bodies' category)
 - Associate Members (Individual and Corporate)
- A redrafting of the Criteria for Ombudsmen Members (formerly Voting members) with an additional key criterion of 'Openness and transparency', and a reference to the adherence by Members to the BIOA Guides ('Principles of good complaint handling' and Principles of good governance')
- New requirements for Complaint Handler Members, with a reference particularly to the Guide to principles of good complaint handling, and a proposal that the Association should not admit to Complaint Handling Membership organisations which use the title of Ombudsman but do not meet the Criteria for Ombudsman Members. (However, it is not intended that those existing Corporate Associate Members who already have that title will be precluded from continuing membership.)

Communications strategy and profile raising

Resulting from the wider 'Future Direction' Review, a consultant, Janet Rafferty, was engaged to carry out a communications and profile-raising review, with the aim of assisting the Association to increase its external communications and profile, as well as improve its communications with members. The report was considered by the Executive Committee in February.

The report provided some signposts for work to be done in this respect, initially concentrating on increased contact with stakeholders (primarily governments), a new website and a possible change of 'trading name' for the Association (see Page 8).

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'The Ombudsman' Newsletter

The Ombudsman newsletter is produced three times a year under the supervision of volunteer Editor and editorial board and has a circulation of around 1,500 copies. Each issue contains news items, case studies, profiles of office holders and member schemes, and a number of feature articles.

As mentioned in the Chair's foreword, Emma Gray has been Editor since August 2007 (Issue 32) and is now stepping down from that position to concentrate on her increasingly busy 'day job' with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. We are most grateful for all her tireless work during the past four years, during which time the newsletter has gone from strength to strength, a tribute both to her professional journalistic experience and her considerable personal enthusiasm and commitment to this voluntary role.

During the year there have been articles on the following topics:

- Devolution of policing and justice in Northern Ireland
- Accredited training pilot course held by Queen Margaret University
- Common complaint-handling systems in Wales
- FOI in Scotland
- The Environmentally Unfriendly joint report by PHSO and LGO
- A Chairman's (of a governing body) view of Ombudsmen
- Sharing and publishing information about complaints
- Project managing a website build
- The Lost at Sea Report of the Irish Ombudsman
- A view from the new BIOA Chair
- A view from the new Chief Ombudsman, UK Financial Ombudsman Service
- The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI)
- Scottish review of complaint handling in public services
- Using new media
- Being accessible
- Support and advocacy in times of need (a view by the Chief Executive of Citizens Advice)
- Ombudsmen and the legacy of the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council
- Administrative Justice, Human Rights and dealing with corruption in Ghana
- Citizens Information Board, Ireland
- Social housing case digest (HouseMark)
- A farewell view from Sir Tony Redmond, on retirement as Chairman of the Commission for Local Administration in England (Local Government Ombudsman)
- Initiatives at the Financial Ombudsman Service
- Meeting the judiciary (in Ireland)
- Health complaints – listening and learning

The membership of the Editorial Board during the year has comprised:

Emma Gray (Editor)	Head of Policy & External Communications, Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Andrew Bradley	Communications Manager, Ombudsman Services
Katherine Butler	Head of Media and Communications, Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman
Jo Fainlight	Interim Communications Manager, Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
Jackie Feeney	Head of Communications, Local Government Ombudsman
Alison Hoyland	Consumer and Parliamentary Liaison, Financial Ombudsman Service
Susan Hudson	Policy & Communications Manager. Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Caroline Mitchell	Ombudsman, 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
Faye West	Internal Communications Officer, Legal Ombudsman

Back copies of 'The Ombudsman' are available to view at or download from the Association's website (www.bioa.org.uk) or in printed form from the Secretary. Anybody who is interested in being added to the mailing list to receive a free personal printed 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, as well as dates of forthcoming BIOA events and activities. Also available in this area are presentations given at Conferences and Seminars. Access details for this area can be obtained from the BIOA Secretary (secretary@bioa.org.uk).

The Name of the Association

During the forthcoming year, it is intended to consider changing the 'trading name' of the Association to 'The Ombudsman Association', both for simplification and to broaden its acceptability in both the Republic of Ireland and in the devolved countries of the UK. A new logo will be devised, incorporating a 'strap line' to describe its principle activity, together with a new web address and web site. It is intended that the formal (legal) name of the Association will remain as it is.

Finances

Finances 2009/10

The income for last year, including the surplus from the 2009 Conference of £13,323 (€14,933), was £104,278 (€116,875). Expenditure was £110,076 (€123,374), giving a total budgeted deficit for the year of £5,798 (€6,499), thereby decreasing the Association's reserves to £100,119 (€112,213).

(Note: figures shown in Euros are calculated at the exchange rate on 31 March 2010 of 1.1208 Euros to the Pound Sterling.)

Finances 2010/11

The income for this year, including the surplus from the Autumn Seminar of £1,989 (€2,267), was £90,355 (€102,969). Expenditure was £114,823 (€130,852), giving a total budgeted deficit for the year of £24,468 (€27,884), thereby decreasing the Association's reserves to £75,651 (€86,212).

(Note: figures shown in Euros are calculated at the exchange rate on 31 March 2011 of 1.1396 Euros to the Pound Sterling.)

Special Interest Groups

The Association has five 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), runs periodic seminars for staff of member schemes on a variety of topics of interest to Ombudsmen and staff of member schemes. The Autumn Seminar this year is reported on fully on Page 5 above.

Legal Interest Group

The Legal Interest Group brings together legal advisers and those with an interest in legal matters within member schemes, including some of the Ombudsmen themselves. It is chaired by Anne Whitehorn, Legal Advisor to the Local Government Ombudsman. Three meetings of the Group were held this year, on 20 April 2010 at Millbank Tower, London, hosted jointly by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and the Local Government Ombudsman, on 12 October 2010 at the offices in London of the Beachcroft LLP, Solicitors, and on 22 March 2011 in Birmingham hosted by the Legal Ombudsman.

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 three times during the year, on 22 April 2010 at the offices in Liverpool of the Independent Case Examiner for DWP, on 19 October 2010 in London at Millbank Tower, the offices of the Local Government Ombudsman, and on 24 March 2011 in Birmingham hosted by the Legal Ombudsman.

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 was chaired by Peter Stansfield, HR Director at the Financial Ombudsman Service until May 2010, and thereafter by Niki Mclean, Head of Services at the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Group met three times during the year, on 21 April 2010 at the offices in Liverpool of the Independent Case Examiner for DWP, on 20 October 2010 in London at Millbank Tower, hosted by the Local Government Ombudsman, and on 23 March 2011 in Birmingham hosted by the Legal Ombudsman.

First Contact Interest Group

The 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, on 29 April 2010 at the offices in London of the Independent Police Complaints Commission, and on 29 October 2010 at the offices in Edinburgh of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Research Interest Group

This is the newest of the special interest Groups and brings together those with an interest in research in member schemes. This is the 'brainchild' of Preth Rao, Head of Policy and Research at the Local Government Ombudsman, and met twice during the year on 7 June 2010 at Millbank Tower, London hosted by the Local Government Ombudsman, and on 25 January 2011 in London at the offices of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman.

(Note: notes of all Interest Group meetings are in the 'members' area' of the BIOA website.)

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Membership

Membership of the Association at 31 March 2011, compared with a year ago, is as follows:

Members	Now	A year ago
Total	126	127
Members (formerly 'Voting members')	32	32
Corporate Associate members	41	42
Individual Associate members	53	53

New members

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

Member (formerly 'Voting member')

- Legal Ombudsman – Adam Sampson (Chief Ombudsman)

Corporate Associate member

- Independent Football Ombudsman – Professor Derek Fraser

Executive Committee

The role of the Executive Committee is to manage the Association on behalf of members. The membership of the Committee during 2010/11 was:

Peter Tyndall (Chair)	Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Carmel Foley	Commissioner, Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission
Ros Gardner	Individual Associate member
Christopher Hamer	The Property Ombudsman
Jane Hingston	Lead Ombudsman, UK Financial Ombudsman Service
Paul Kenny	Pensions Ombudsman for Ireland
Tony King	UK Pensions Ombudsman
Jane Martin	Acting Chair of the Commission for Local Administration in England (Local Government Ombudsman)
Suzanne McCarthy	Immigration Services Commissioner
Bill Richardson	Deputy Chief Executive, UK Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman for England
Ian Pattison (Secretary)	BIOA Secretary

No Vice-Chair was elected for this year.

The Executive Committee met four times during the year on:

- 24 June 2010
- 16 September
- 2 December 2010
- 10 February 2011

(Note: the meeting planned for 15 April 2010 was cancelled due to travel disruption caused by the Icelandic volcanic dust.)

Validation Committee

The role of the Validation Committee is to advise the Executive Committee on whether applications for (full) Membership should be approved. The Validation Committee's membership during 2010/11 has been:

Peter Tyndall	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
BIOA Chair	
Ann Abraham	UK Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman for England
Margaret Doyle	Independent Consultant
Professor Mary Seneviratne	Director of Research, Nottingham Law School
Laurence Shurman	Former Banking Ombudsman (from December 2010)
Helena Wiesner	Consumer Consultant (until December 2010)
Ian Pattison (Secretary)	Secretary, British and Irish Ombudsman Association

There were only two new applications for (full) Membership this year. One was approved; the other not.

The Validation Committee was also asked by the Executive Committee to continue with its review of Criteria and Rules. This is reported in more detail above (on Page 7).

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

Member Schemes of the Association At 31 March 2011

Members (Formerly 'Voting Members')

Bermuda Ombudsman
Complaints Commissioner for the Cayman Islands
Energy 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 Ombudsman, England and Wales
Local Government Ombudsmen, England
Northern Ireland Ombudsman
Ombudsman and Information Commissioner for Ireland
Ombudsman for the Defence Forces, Ireland
Otelco (Telecommunications Ombudsman)
Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman
Pensions Ombudsman
Pensions Ombudsman of Ireland
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Property Ombudsman
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Removals Industry Ombudsman
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Surveyors Ombudsman Service
The Equality Tribunal, Ireland
Waterways Ombudsman

Associate Members

Consumer and Professional Organisations

Beachcroft LLP, Solicitors

Complaint-Handling Bodies

Adjudicator, Revenue and Customs, Valuation Office Agency, Public Guardianship Office, and the Insolvency Service
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
Complaints Commissioner for the British Virgin Islands
Criminal Records Bureau (Independent Complaints Monitor)
Furniture Ombudsman
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 Football Ombudsman
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)
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
Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland
Press Ombudsman, Ireland
Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for England and Wales
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Scottish Information Commissioner
Scottish Legal Complaints Commission
Scottish Parliamentary Standards Commissioner
Service Complaints Commissioner for the Armed Forces
Standards Board for England
The Dispute Service Limited



British and Irish
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April 2011