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# Our sector can deliver, if we work together



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L t's hard to think of a parallel for the past year, in which humanity has had to step up so quickly to respond to such an immediate and existential threat. Whilst there has been (and still is) huge suffering and loss, the year has also demonstrated our ability to innovate and collaborate within and across boundaries, in a way never seen in peacetime.

Collaboration is one of the EI's core values. Coming into the EI as its new CEO, I have been deeply impressed to see how 'lived' this is among the staff team and our broader 'family' of committed networks. This is a powerful attribute and sits at the heart of my aspiration for the organisation.

Why? When we look across energy, we can probably find agreement that our greatest priority and challenge is to tackle the climate emergency at a pace consistent with the science, as well as meeting the needs of growing populations and those without access to reliable energy.

What's harder to land on is a solution, in part because there are many possible pathways and a lot we don't know yet. But it's also because those that need to be involved are so fragmented – geographically, institutionally, sectorally and, at times, politically.

### **Big tent**

The EI, from the outside looking in, always fascinated me. As an organisation it is such a big tent, and one that doesn't stand still, since it brought disparate elements of the energy world under one roof back in 2003. I feel lucky and honoured to inherit the legacy left by my predecessor and everyone involved in the EI over the past decades.

Among our individual membership, we are rapidly extending across geographies, with more international members than ever before; across gender (particularly amongst our young professionals); across a broad range of energy technologies and disciplines, some of which didn't exist just a few years ago. And this isn't just about the services and benefits we provide – the skills and mentoring, recognition for fast-evolving careers, and the wide-angle lens members gain across our increasingly interconnected energy system.

It's also about communities of expertise, without which the EI would be nothing. You bring your expertise, commitment to professionalism, in many cases volunteer your time and energy to progress shared activities that better our sector. To all of our volunteers around the world, thank you.

# **Collaborative ethos**

This translates into something profound through our company membership and technical programme. Working together we define and pursue a shared ambition for meeting the sector's communal needs, and in a far more cost-effective way than would otherwise be possible.

This collaborative ethos can be seen in the recently published annual report of the EI's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), which guides the expanding programme of good practice activity, and involves more than 1,000 experts from 200 companies in 100 countries.\*

Built up over decades in conventional energy, the proven model is being extended and transferred to the needs of fastgrowing low-carbon technologies, helping to make on and offshore wind operations safer, alongside even newer programmes in carbon capture, use and storage (CCUS), hydrogen, solar and integrated power systems. And we are doing it in dynamic ways, not least through our Toolbox web app, taking bite-size health and safety advice in multiple languages, direct to frontline workers.

## **Outward looking**

The EI is a trusted voice and convener of fact-based debate; one that also looks outwards to support others with common goals, within and beyond the energy sector.

We are embedded and busy

in so many vital collaborative endeavours, such as the Methane Guiding Principles initiative, the National Engineering Policy Centre at the Royal Academy of Engineering and, through the UN's Race to Zero, we're part of a global movement leading by example in ending the impact of our own operations on the climate.

In my first weeks in the job, I've been delighted to pick up discussions with Terra Carta, through which HRH Prince Charles, an Honorary Fellow of the EI, is bringing together the private sector behind a shared vision for sustainability to 2030. And as part of the Tomorrow's Engineers Code, we've joined dozens of organisations in committing to promote vital STEM careers.

#### A new era of collaboration

The past year has been incredibly tough, individually, for our sector and for society. But together we have shown that bold action is possible. It's not been perfect, but we have responded to an existential threat with concerted action.

Climate change is arguably an even greater, certainly more enduring crisis, and the change required more fundamental.

Humanity is capable of so much – and our sector's achievements to date are proof of that. COP26 provides an opportunity for governments, societies and industries to make a bold new commitment to work together. Failure to do so would be catastrophic.

The EI is small by comparison, but its reach across the world of energy means it punches significantly above its weight. I aspire for us to be a growing catalyst for change and look forward to supporting you, our members, and hearing your views and ideas on what more we can do. ●

Nick Wayth became CEO of the Energy Institute on 4 May 2021 and can be contacted at **ceo@energyinst.org** 

\* The STAC Annual Report is at www.energy-inst.org/stac