



# **UKELA Strategy 2016 to 2020**

**Better Environmental Law  
through Measured Ambition**

## **Contents**

<a href="#">Executive Summary</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Introduction</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">UKELA's Mission &amp; Purpose</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Our Strengths and Opportunities</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Our Context</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Our Strategic Aims Overall</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Strategic Aims and Targets</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Our Team</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Our Partners</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Financial Resources</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Implementation &amp; Monitoring</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Conclusion</a>	<a href="#">21</a>

# Executive Summary

UKELA occupies a unique niche in the UK environmental and legal sectors. We aim to make the law work for a better environment and to improve understanding and awareness of environmental law. We were established in 1988 and will be celebrating our 30th anniversary in 2018.

UKELA's Trustees have adopted a four-year strategic planning cycle. This document sets out our strategy for the period 2016 to 2020. The strategy has been developed with contributions from all parts of UKELA: Trustees, Patrons, members & volunteers, working parties, regional groups and staff. We are grateful for people's time, energy and vision.

Our six strategic aims for this period build on those from the previous plan period, 2012 to 2015; they have been given a sharper focus and re-ordered to give a higher priority to our membership services and include a new aim that guides our operations and resource management.

Each strategic aim is supported by a number of objectives and targets that can be adjusted and updated for individual years in the plan period, using our annual work plan as the delivery mechanism. In this way, we can make sure each successive annual work plan moves us progressively towards achieving our strategic aims.

The strategy describes the staff, volunteer and financial resources we will need. It also suggests some of the choices we can make to allow us to adapt our delivery in line with different funding levels.

We will choose an over-arching theme for our work in each year of the plan to give our activities and development work a clear focus. For 2016, our theme is an international one. We will choose each theme in the autumn of the previous year to allow us to respond to the emerging context at any one time.

## Our key areas for development in the next four years are:

**Membership** – to deepen our membership in our core constituencies and extend our reach to other parts of the sector. We aim to increase membership numbers and revenue by between 10% and 20%.

**Interventions** – to make strategic, focused and influential interventions. In the context of the current government's emphasis on de-regulation and growth, with increasing divergence within devolved administrations and the potential for EU Exit to change our context completely, this is a challenging agenda.

**Devolved Administrations** – to apply the learning points from our successful work in Wales during the last plan period and embed a sustainable approach across all 3 devolved administrations.

**Public Information** – to benchmark our provision against other services to ensure we both support our unique niche and have strong synergy with other providers of environmental and legal information.

**International** – to use our new themed approach and international year for 2016 both to launch our international membership category and use our annual conference to embed and nurture international partnerships.

**Operations** – to conduct UKELA's people, business and financial management in line with good practice in our sector, improving our systems and enhancing our resources where the business case is strong.

This is a living document and will be integrated into each annual work plan. Comments and suggestions on how to adapt and improve it are welcome at any time.

Our aim overall – as a small charity, with an established reputation, working in a niche sector with an extensive volunteer network of engaged, knowledgeable professionals – is to build our community of practice and demonstrate measured ambition in all we do.

# Introduction

UKELA's Trustees have adopted a four-year strategic planning cycle. This document sets out our strategy for the period 2016 to 2020. The strategy has been developed with contributions from all parts of UKELA: Trustees, Patrons, members and volunteers, working parties, regional groups, partners and staff. We are grateful for people's time, energy and vision.

The sections that follow describe our mission and purpose, set out our strategic objectives and priorities for the next four years and provide a commentary on the human and financial resources we need to achieve our aims.

We hope you find the document useful and informative. We welcome comments on it at any time via the enquiries page of our [website](#) or by email to Operations Director, Alison Boyd on [alison@ukela.org](mailto:alison@ukela.org).

# UKELA's Mission & Purpose

UKELA occupies a unique niche in the UK environmental and legal sectors. We aim to make the law work for a better environment and to improve understanding and awareness of environmental law. We were established in 1988 and will be celebrating our 30th anniversary in 2018.

We are a registered charity (299498) and a limited company (2133283). Our charitable objects include promoting, for the benefit of the public generally, the enhancement and conservation of the environment in the UK and advancing the education of the public in all matters relating to the development, teaching, application and practice of law relating to the environment.

We encourage collaboration between those interested in environmental law, as well as advising and commenting on relevant issues. We see ourselves as enabling networks and dialogue between environmental and legal professionals to both facilitate and nurture a community of engaged practitioners.

As a charity UKELA has to provide a public benefit from the money it receives. One of our main aims is to make the law work for a better environment. We do this by influencing and commenting on the law as it is formulated.

We convene a number of networks to facilitate connections and knowledge-sharing between our various member interests.

Topic-based Working Parties bring together those with specialist knowledge on e.g. Climate Change and Energy, Environmental Litigation, Land Contamination, Nature Conservation, Noise, Planning & Sustainable Development, Waste and Water.

Geographically-based groups operate in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to facilitate know-how exchange on environmental law within the Devolved Administrations. Groups in each of our six English regions host CPD events and facilitate networks of local practitioners.

We also have networks of students and staff across academic institutions and a number of Special Interest Groups on cross-cutting themes such as the circular economy and Wild Law.

Our membership and networks allow us to access advice and expertise on a wide range of environmental and legal topics relevant to our aims. Our Working Parties in particular comment on government consultations and work proactively with policy makers to provide objective commentary on ways of making the law work for a better environment.

# Our Strengths

UKELA has been in existence for over 25 years. This kind of longevity has arisen from knowing our strengths and playing to them.

In capturing views from UKELA's community and partners on this subject, the following strengths were considered of most importance as things to build on in the future. They are listed in order of the frequency with which stakeholders referred to them.

- **Expertise** – our topic and geographically-based groups allow us to draw on sector-leading, specialist knowledge.
- **Networking & events** – our events programme, and in particular our annual conference, is viewed to be of a high standard, on topical subject matter, delivered in accessible formats at venues that facilitate networking.
- **Diversity** – UKELA brings together representatives from a wide range of parts of the environmental sector, occupying a unique niche.
- **Authority and reputation** – our voice is respected in the circles that both matter to us, and that also help us achieve our mission and aims.
- **Commitment of members and volunteers** – we are fortunate to be able to draw on a core of committed members.
- **Friendly, informal, inclusive** – we are viewed to be all of these things, which helps maintain our diversity and supports membership retention
- **Resourceful** – we do a lot with limited means; managing our money well keeps us strong as a charity.
- **Strong staff team** – while the team is small, the combined skills and knowledge are considerable, both in breadth and depth

In deciding how best to build on our strengths and, in so doing, realising opportunities and managing risks, there are two key questions of balance to consider:

- Breadth of interest vs. expertise;
- Activism vs. objectivity.

It is a key part of Trustees' collective role to ensure this balance is maintained.

An appraisal of our context, including key shifts, opportunities and risks is provided in the next section of this document.

# Our Context – Key Trends and Changes

A range of changes and trends will exert a particular emphasis on the professional and business context in which we operate during this strategic plan period.

The table below identifies those that we believe are most significant to the organisation and our members in general. It also includes various steps we will take to anticipate and / or respond to these matters.

Change / Trend	Steps UKELA will take to address this change / trend
<p><b>Level of professional engagement</b> – some law firms no longer actively participate in UKELA. In some cases they no longer have dedicated environmental law resources. In others this may be due in part to a culture change where participation in professional associations is not encouraged as much as it was in the past. Changes to professional body CPD requirements and monitoring may also have an influence here.</p>	<p>We will engage with 10-15 law firms in 2016 and 2017 to ascertain the precise nature of members' needs and to develop solutions.</p>
<p><b>Deregulation</b> – in policy and economic terms, environmental law in the UK has a lower priority than it had prior to the 2007 to 2013 recession. For example, some environmental laws can be seen by policy makers as “anti-growth”. It is a short step from deregulation to sending a message to business and their advisors that environmental law matters less and less. This factor may also contribute to the relative disengagement of some commercial law firms.</p>	<p>We will continue to make effective interventions that spell out the practical impact of policy and legal changes on the environment, the integrity of environmental law and access to environmental justice. It may be necessary for UKELA to undertake more targeted interventions in the future, particularly in relation to deregulatory measures.</p>
<p><b>Austerity</b> – continuing cuts to the public sector are likely to have a deleterious effect on the environment – e.g. as regulator and local authority staff and training budgets for membership of bodies like UKELA and for environmental enforcement training are cut.</p>	<p>We will use our best efforts to attract members from the public sector by continuing to keep subscription and event fees as low as our funding structure allows. We will explore how we might refocus our educational work and resources in response to gaps in provision for environmental professionals working in the public sector.</p>
<p><b>Devolution</b> – this is gathering pace in the UK's devolved administrations. The shape and substance of environmental law in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is becoming increasingly tailored to the specific needs of these parts of the UK.</p>	<p>We need to ensure that UKELA's members in devolved administrations are supported adequately with events, resources and professional networks to support their areas of specialism. Our DA groups must also be resourced to monitor and respond effectively to proposed changes to environmental law.</p>

# Our Strategic Aims

As part of the planning process, we have reviewed our current five strategic aims to ensure they can continue to guide us throughout this next period and allow us to anticipate and respond to the changes and trends we have identified.

The substance of all our current aims remains relevant. We have kept two aims the same and adjusted the wording of three, to shift emphasis or simplify them. In addition, we have created a new, sixth aim, relating to our operations, to ensure we give this fundamental underpinning of UKELA's work the priority it needs.

Our revised aims for 2016 to 2020 are set out below.

**Membership:** attract and retain a diverse and representative membership by delivering relevant, high-quality events, information and membership benefits (*simplified from current aim*)

**Interventions:** make strategic, focused and influential interventions that promote dialogue and have identifiable impacts on UK environmental law (*no change*)

**Devolution:** ensure UKELA has a sufficiently resilient structure across the devolved administrations to engage in an increasingly divergent UK system of environmental law (*simplified from current aim*)

**Public Information:** provide information to the UK public to raise awareness of environmental law and its inherent rights and responsibilities (*simplified from current aim*)

**International:** Interact with international bodies to share knowledge, foster co-operation and enhance networking in key jurisdictions relevant to members' working lives (*no change*)

**Operations:** conduct UKELA's people, business and financial management in line with good practice in our sector (*new aim*)

In the pages that follow, we elaborate on each of these aims, setting out the key influences in each area and how our priorities for each area translate into specific objectives.



# Membership

**Strategic Aim: attract and retain a diverse and representative membership by delivering relevant, high-quality events, information and membership benefits.**

## Context

As a membership organisation, we depend on the pro-bono contribution and specialist knowledge of members of our working parties and regional groups to help secure better environmental laws through expert advice and commentary. We also rely on membership subscriptions and fundraising initiatives to keep our organisation adequately resourced. In return we provide a range of benefits to our members – particularly events to keep specialist knowledge refreshed and networking opportunities – that allow us to retain their support and to attract new members to our ranks.

A substantial proportion of UKELA's membership is in London and the south-east – as it is for the legal profession as a whole. As a UK-wide body, we will continue to work hard to support all our members with relevant services and benefits, irrespective of geographic location.

## Recent developments & future trends

UKELA's current total membership is approximately 1,400 – some 850 individual members and ca. 55 corporate members (each corporate member having up to 10 individual members).

Over recent years UKELA's membership in overall terms has been broadly static, as departing members are replaced by new ones. In some parts of the UK and some sectors we have experienced modest or even substantial decline; in others we have seen growth as a result of investment in staff and marketing activity, with student numbers and members in Wales being particular successes. Given that there are arguably fewer environmental law practitioners these days than there have been in the past, we have done well to maintain our membership base.

However, if we simply set ourselves a goal of retaining membership at 1,400, the risk over the longer term is

that we will decline as an organisation – e.g. as environmental professionals leave the sector. Decline would mean a UKELA that is less able to deliver on its mandate of supporting the development of laws that better protect our environment. This prospect is not acceptable, particularly at a time when environmental law and regulation is facing challenges from deep budget cuts to some Government departments and regulatory bodies, as well as deregulation.

Our events programme is well-established and supported and routine delegate feedback monitoring shows that quality is generally very high. We will maintain this emphasis. We have been increasing the use of live and recorded webcasts and audio recordings of key events to allow wider participation from remote audiences. This needs to be given a higher priority to allow members to access high quality professional know-how as flexibly as possible.

## Objective 1: to grow our membership by between 10% and 20% in line with our sectoral plan

Our 2016-2020 plan seeks to increase UKELA membership by some 10% to 20% to some 1,600 to 1,800 members by diversifying our appeal and retaining specialist interest. In simple terms, the higher target equates to attracting 100 new members for each year of our new strategic plan – or, by way of example, 50 individual members and 5 corporate members. The first year of the plan will see UKELA build a marketing platform and capacity for a major development push in 2017 and 2018, our 30th anniversary year. 20% growth would mean building the membership over the next four years as shown in the table below.

In 2015 we worked on a new brand for UKELA, together with a new website, which we launched in the first quarter of 2016. This will allow us to improve our communications and member services to support our membership drive. Our focus on providing a high-quality e-bulletin, e-law, will continue. Our new website will allow us to enhance e-law as a membership benefit in 2016.

We will continue to seek input and ideas from our Membership Development Group to help us to retain existing members and recruit new ones.

Year	Membership Target	Membership Increase	Comments
2016	1,400	0	Timing of membership renewals (December) means we have limited opportunity for growth in 2016
2017	1,460	60	Foundation for this growth laid in 2016
2018	1,580	120	Foundation for this growth laid in 2017
2019	1,700	120	Foundation for this growth laid in 2018
2020	1,820	120	These renewals (from December 2019) will impact 2020 budget

**Objective 2: to deliver a topical, high quality, UK-wide events programme that meets member's professional needs**

In order to achieve 10% to 20% growth in members, the strategy to 2020 assumes that we will refresh our offering to members and deliver more membership benefits, using our new website as a key contribution.

The table below shows the main elements of our programme of events and identifies some potential new initiatives for the future (highlighted in italics):

**Measuring our success**

The measurement of our success will be apparent from:

- the growth in our membership numbers overall;
- the distribution of our members geographically across the UK;
- our ability to retain members over the long-term;
- retaining our focus on meeting continuing professional development needs (CPD)
- member feedback on membership benefits in general and the quality of our events in particular.

<b>2015 Events /Activities</b>	<b>2016 – 2020 Events /Activities</b>
Annual Conference	Continue to rotate around different parts of the UK. Ongoing emphasis on technical relevance and <i>value for money for all sectors of our membership.</i>
Annual Garner Lecture	Evaluation of delegate feedback shows this remains an important and relevant part of our programme. <i>We will look to increase the diversity of speakers.</i>
Scotland	<i>Priority for membership development in 2016.</i> Annual Conference / AGM & local events on topical issues. <i>Use reserve funds to resource work on regulatory reform agenda.</i>
Wales	Support the new Convenors and build on the sound foundation of two years' Esmee Fairbairn funding. AGM & local events on topical issues, continuing presence at Legal Wales conference. <i>Provide Welsh Government with input on Legislative Programme for new Assembly from May 2016 onwards.</i>
Northern Ireland	Annual Conference / AGM & local events on topical issues. <i>Facilitate whole Ireland events or partnerships and provide stakeholder feedback to DoE NI on regulatory reform proposals.</i>
London Seminar Programme	Work in partnership with Herbert Smith to deliver topical programme in each strategy year.
English Regions	AGM & local events on topical issues, with <i>focus on improving connections to local student members &amp; academic institutions.</i>
Student Programme	Our student offer is strong, comprising Moot, essay and academic achievement competitions, careers evenings and career development bursaries. <i>Our focus in the strategy period will be on reaching a wider student audience, maintaining funding for our bursary programme and establishing a sustainable Ambassador programme.</i>
Young UKELA Programme	Continue our well-attended seminar programme aimed at recently qualified members, who want to re-inforce their understanding of environmental law foundations.
Annual Fundraising Lunch in London	Continue London event & <i>explore potential for local fundraising events across our regions.</i>
No equivalent	<i>Event/engagement programme for our International Members.</i>
No equivalent	<i>Regular Patrons Event – lunch / dinner.</i>
<b>Total number of events in 2015 – ca. 30</b>	<b>Total number of events per year by 2020 – 35 to 40.</b>

# Interventions

**Strategic Aim: To make strategic, focused and influential interventions that promote dialogue and have identifiable impacts on UK environmental law.**

## Context

UKELA's topic-based Working Parties bring together those with specialist knowledge on e.g. Climate Change and Energy, Environmental Litigation, Land Contamination, Nature Conservation, Planning & Sustainable Development, Waste and Water. Geographically-based groups in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales facilitate know-how exchange on environmental law between members within the Devolved Administrations.

Both types of group offer constructive, objective advice on new and emerging environmental legislation and guidance, to help secure better law for the environment. We also have a smaller number of Special Interest Groups that address cross-cutting themes such as the circular economy and Wild Law.

We promote the adoption of a number of key principles in our influencing work, e.g. coherence, integration and transparency. Adhering to these common principles allows us to be consistent in our comments across the legislative spectrum. Examples of recent successful interventions include:

- Drawing on our **environmental litigation** experience to influence the development of the Sentencing Council's 2014 guideline for environmental offences and tracking its implementation.
- **Nature conservation** work to follow and contribute to the European Commission review of the EC wildlife directives and the implementation of European species protection measures under the Habitats Directive.
- Input through our **Wales Working Party** on the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 to strengthen the function of the Future Generations Commissioner.

## Recent developments & future trends

In the latter half of the previous strategy period, we reviewed and updated our Working Party guidance. This is being progressively implemented and the last actions from this review will take place in this new strategy period.

The composition and intensity of activity of each group will often vary over time, depending on e.g. the pace of legislative developments in any subject area and the ability of group convenors and members to

contribute time and energy. New groups are formed when demand and interest from members is evident. Our most recently established groups deal with the circular economy, formed in late 2014, and noise, just formed and with its inaugural event planned for Autumn 2016.

Our aim in supporting groups and networks is to balance the organisational need to cover relevant areas of the physical environment, with members' interests and ability to commit regular volunteer effort.

Resourcing and succession planning for Working Parties is an important consideration. Busy professionals will always be limited in the time they can commit to UKELA. Also, the work requires members to have a combination of specialist knowledge and substantial experience to be effective. As a result, we are likely always to be drawing on a relatively small pool of genuinely active members for each subject area. This makes succession planning for the Convenors who co-ordinate working party interventions a key topic.

Elsewhere in this document we have already referred to the effects of a deregulatory agenda and austerity measures on our work. It is clear that, as a result of these two factors, in policy and economic terms, environmental law in the UK has a lower priority than it had prior to the 2007 to 2013 recession. This can bring threats e.g. in the form of lower environmental standards or fewer resources for enforcement, as well as providing opportunities for UKELA to contribute to hard-pressed policy makers and regulators. We are tracking the implications of an exit from the EU in various ways as this would change the environmental law landscape in fundamental ways; UKELA would need to re-evaluate its intervention priorities rapidly in the event of a referendum vote in June 2016 to exit.

**Objective 1: UKELA's working parties are equipped to engage with Government Departments, environmental regulators and other relevant authorities on priority topics**

Having reviewed working party operating guidance in the previous plan period, we will build on this to ensure that working party (WP) and special interest group (SIG) topic coverage covers all priority areas of environmental law. Recently formed working parties, for example on noise, will be nurtured in their early stages and new ones e.g. on air, will be created if necessary and supported by engaged members. The reporting and archiving of interventions will also need to be maintained and enhanced.

This means that interventions by WPs and SIGs will need to be:

- (i) **strategic:** by which we mean that interventions should be made principally on the most important topics in environmental law and policy, rather than peripheral or cosmetic matters. This is a question of judgement for the working parties and/or devolved administration groups to decide. It should not, however, be taken to mean that interventions should only be undertaken in relation to primary legislative processes. Some highly effective interventions have been made in respect of secondary and tertiary legislation and in providing evidence to bodies commissioned to make recommendations on behalf of government.
- (ii) **focused:** recent interventions have demonstrated that policy makers and legislators tend to prefer detailed commentary and constructive suggestions on the most significant provisions, rather than general commentary on the measure as a whole. This is where UKELA's expertise can be put to best use.
- (iii) **intended to promote dialogue:** best achieved through acting as a 'critical friend'. We will continue to draw on the defining characteristics and core principles of good legislation in order to improve the law, rather than seeking to dictate what the law should be. Accordingly, interventions should stress the importance of transparency, integration and coherence, together with accountability and public participation where relevant.
- (iv) **capable of generating identifiable impacts:** through detailed commentary and suggesting alternative approaches or forms of words that will improve law or policy, accountability or enforceability, public participation, or better compliance with EU or international obligations. UKELA has already been able to influence the drafting of legislative amendments and statutory guidance that has led to more coherent and better-integrated law and this outcome will continue to be our aim.

**Objective 2: UKELA's interventions promote law for a better environment in the context of the current UK Government's deregulation and growth agenda**

The current UK Government is likely to emphasise deregulation and growth for the remainder of its term. UKELA will monitor and provide objective comment on the government's deregulation agenda so far as it affects environmental law, including cross-cutting initiatives such as the Red Tape Challenge.

UKELA's interventions may, on occasion, need to stress the effects of deregulation on the coherence and integration of environmental law as a whole. Wholesale deregulation will doubtless undermine these ideals but more targeted and surgical deregulation may actually improve integration, coherence and transparency in the law. UKELA must be willing to respond appropriately and constructively

to both of these possibilities.

**Measuring our success**

Success in interventions can be measured by the following outcomes:

- The production of timely, strategic and focused interventions that provide sufficient depth of analysis and constructive commentary to assist policy-makers and legislators in improving the law.
- A well-maintained archive of interventions by all WPs and SIGs.
- An increase in invited contributions from UKELA as respect for our good faith and expertise increases.
- Effective succession planning that means we are never short of experienced convenors, drawn from a pool of active working party members.

# Devolution

**Strategic Aim: ensure UKELA has a sufficiently resilient structure across the devolved administrations to engage in an increasingly divergent UK system of environmental law.**

## Context

UKELA has had active groups of members in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for many years. Providing resources to support these groups, particularly in influencing policy and legislation, has been a challenge given UKELA's overall very limited staff and funding. In 2013, UKELA secured two years of funding for a part-time Wales Co-ordinator. Viewed as a "pilot" to explore what mechanisms were effective in making groups sustainable in the long-term, this post was successful in raising UKELA's profile and influence, improving the events programme and achieving modest increases in membership.

In October 2014 UKELA Council established a sub-committee of Trustees to review strategy and resourcing for our work in the devolved administrations of the UK. The sub-committee (the "DA Group") submitted a report to Council in February 2015 covering the following areas:

- current levels of activity and impact in each of the devolved administrations and their "fit" with UKELA's strategy;
- ways in which UKELA can maintain a sustainable level of service to meet members' needs; and
- where and why strategy for each devolved administration may need to be different to respect local context and priorities.

The DA group was allocated funds that have been used in part to:

- support an additional 3 months of resource in Wales following the end of Esmee Fairbairn funding to ensure that lessons from this could be captured for the benefit of all 3 DA groups; and
- fund an intern to investigate alternative sources of funding for additional support in the DAs.

## Recent developments & future trends

Divergence in the approach to environmental law and regulation in the UK regions continues to widen, so it is important that UKELA has a distinct voice and champions best practice where we see it, particularly in the face of increasing deregulation in England. The tendency in commercial legal practices to reduce numbers of dedicated environmental specialists has an even more marked effect in the DAs where the market is smaller.

Also, in Scotland and Northern Ireland in particular,

there is a distinct, and thriving energy sector (primarily focusing on onshore wind but also including other areas of renewable energy and oil and gas). There is a tendency to see these issues as more contractual or planning-related than environmental. This provides UKELA with an opportunity to strengthen links with this sector and grow our membership.

**Objective 1: maintain and develop the profile and identity of UKELA's devolved administration structures such that they contribute to UKELA locally and corporately**

While UKELA membership overall has remained fairly constant in recent years, membership registered in Scotland has almost halved. Our biggest event in Scotland in 2015, a parallel session at February's Sniffer conference on flooding, was well-attended overall, but with limited participation from UKELA members. This indicates that partnered initiatives may well be an important part of our future strategy in this area.

Some feedback we have received suggests that Scottish legal firms consider participation in UKELA at UK level to be worthwhile, but not within Scotland. It is therefore crucial to run a programme of events that boosts UKELA's reputation in Scotland as an authoritative organisation that confers tangible benefits on members in terms of professional development and networking.

Following two years of investment, Wales now has a strong foundation that the recently appointed committee and Convenors can build on with the right support from staff and Council.

UKELA's presence in Northern Ireland has always been "niche", in common with other bodies in the professional and legal sector. Partnered initiatives, such as our successful Autumn 2015 event with EPlanI, are most likely the best way to keep our members engaged.

UKELA Council will support DA committees in working to clear terms of reference and holding regular meetings, especially AGMs, to ensure they are accountable to local members.

To achieve our objective, devolved administration events and membership programmes will be supported centrally with additional staff resource in 2016, with part of a new post dedicated to this work.

**Objective 2: secure funding for co-ordinating resource in line with local needs.**

A key learning point from our pilot in Wales is that local personnel, who have networks and knowledge relevant to the geographic area, are an important

ingredient in making our work effective. This is particularly the case in relation to influencing and intervention activities.

For this strategy period we will use funding from reserves and investigate new funds to:

- secure a measure of dedicated support to influence regulatory developments in Scotland in 2016/17;
- engage with Welsh Government on the legislative programme in the new Welsh Assembly term from May 2016 onwards;
- provide stakeholder feedback to DoE NI on regulatory reform proposals as they emerge from 2016.

## **Measuring our success**

Success in this area can be measured by the following outcomes:

- Strong committees holding regular meetings to which the whole group makes a valuable contribution.
- A vibrant programme of events (minimum of three events annually, with five to six being the ideal).
- Evidence of increasing membership, in line with our targets under our membership plan.

# Public Information

**Strategic Aim: provide information to the UK public to raise awareness of environmental law and its inherent rights and responsibilities**

## Context

The general public is becoming more aware of environmental issues that affect them close to home. The increasing desire to act on this awareness calls for effective channels of information sharing to help the public make informed decisions about how they can contribute to finding solutions.

The role of environmental law in addressing these concerns is increasing in prominence, and its being put to good effect increasingly necessary.

## Recent developments & future trends

- Recent successful cases such as the Client Earth air pollution case in the UK and the Urgenda climate change case in the Netherlands point to an increasing role for the courts in ruling on whether governments are fulfilling their obligations to protect the public;
- Major international commitments such as those arising from COP21 in Paris in December 2015 are further raising public awareness and expectations of action and therefore litigation if there is a failure to act;
- Flooding as a result of increasingly severe weather events causes substantial and direct impacts on the public, especially where insurance becomes unaffordable or even unavailable.

**Objective 1: maintain and develop accessible, web-based resources to provide information to the public**

### Law & Your Environment

UKELA's Law & Your Environment website (L&YE) acts as a dedicated resource for members of the public. It has been running for some 6 years and consistently achieves ca. 400,000 visitors p.a., with the most viewed web pages relating to aspects of noise and nuisance.

As a separate but linked website to the main UKELA site, it is important to ensure that the two sites are complementary. To this end, we will review the relationship between Law & Your Environment and ukela.org to ensure synergy between the messages and marketing of both. Scoping of this work in Q4 2016 would allow us to allocate resources for action in 2017.

In addition to such a review of current material, UKELA must consider how – as part of its overall communications strategy – it can promote both websites and drive traffic to each of them.

### Social media and other online channels

Online users increasingly prefer multi-faceted, online options for sourcing content. Static websites are losing prominence as the primary means of providing content and so other channels will need to be reviewed. The UKELA Linked In page, Facebook content and Twitter usage will all need to be reviewed to ensure they fulfil their public information potential.

### UKELA website blog

A blog or commentary page may be a useful complement to the static websites to keep content fresh and accessible for evolving contexts. We will explore this and other mechanisms for content generation and dissemination during the plan period.

**Objective 2: ensure our information and services complement provision elsewhere**

Other online resources providing environmental information are becoming more readily available for the general public. We will benchmark UKELA's offer against other relevant products and services e.g. Gov.uk to ensure that we complement them. Scoping of this work in Q4 2016 would allow us to allocate resources for action in 2017.

This review will ensure that we continue to add value and can develop resources where we find gaps in provision that match our specialist knowledge. We could also consider collaborative efforts where resources allow.

## Measuring our success

Success in this area can be measured by the following outcomes:

- Hit rates on Law & Your Environment and main UKELA websites.
- Queries received from members of the public.
- Uptake on relevant UKELA events or materials (e.g. webinars).

# International Connections

**Strategic Aim: To interact with international environmental law organisations ("IELOs") to share knowledge, foster co-operation and enhance networking in key jurisdictions relevant to UKELA or members' working lives.**

## Context

UKELA, by definition, focuses on environmental laws applicable in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. However, the majority of environmental laws have international roots, mostly emanating from the EU. In addition, an ever-increasing number of environmental commitments have global implications (for example the Paris Agreement COP21).

In the past, UKELA has had informal connections with a limited number of IELOs and various international speakers have attended Annual Conferences and Garner Lectures (the latter also being viewed by videolink by members of the Flemish Bar Association for example). UKELA has also on occasion participated in hosting visits to the UK from international delegations.

In addition, some UKELA members have sought to make informal, ad hoc connections between UKELA and their individual professional contacts.

## Recent developments & future trends

Environmental issues are global in their effect and legislation increasingly reflects this. Practitioners are working on international projects, with international clients. Even where practitioners are working on UK projects, their clients will frequently have operations globally and will be thinking about a unified approach to environmental management and compliance.

The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP21) appears to have triggered a greater-than-ever consideration of international environmental action and put "climate change" back on political, commercial and personal agendas.

**Objective 1: develop connections that allow mutual learning and relate to UKELA's geographic coverage and jurisdictions**

To make best use of UKELA's limited resource and leverage maximum benefit for our members, it is important that we develop connections with a limited number of prestigious IELOs around the world that either have similar aims to UKELA (albeit applicable to their own jurisdiction), or that represent environmental lawyers and others (as UKELA does) in

their jurisdictions. The connections should aim to allow mutual learning and sharing of information, with the emphasis on long-term partnerships.

We will use the opportunity of our 2016 conference to develop our international network and lay a foundation for our international membership, both in terms of our membership targets and our partnerships.

**Objective 2: explore the potential for comparative studies and collaborative research in topics that will add value to members' work and practice**

We will map the research and collaborative opportunities that arise from our Internationally-themed conference in 2016, with particular emphasis on working with the IELOs with whom we have made connections. We will use this mapping to set realistic objectives for subsequent years in this strategic plan period.

## Measuring our success

Success in this area can be measured by the following outcomes:

- Formal or informal connections made with IELOs – either a greater number of connections made (for example at staff or WP Convenor levels, rather than Trustee level) or connections made with IELOs that UKELA has not previously engaged with.
- Attendance at the conference or other events (e.g. Garner) in person or virtually by members of IELOs
- Offering a new category of international membership and attracting members to that category
- Publishing articles in E-law from international lawyers or IELOs
- Publishing articles in other publications that have been co-authored by IELO members and UKELA members (and are 'badged' as such)



# Operations

**Strategic Aim: conduct UKELA's people, business and financial management in line with good practice benchmarks in our sector.**

## Context

UKELA delivers a wide range of activities with a very small staff team of 1.5 full-time equivalents. This team is consistently operating at full stretch, with little contingency. Also, as a "virtual" organisation, with home-based staff, we need to pay particular attention to wellbeing and employment practices, to ensure staff are supported in ways appropriate to their part-time contracts and UKELA's requirement for flexible working, often outside normal office hours.

Our finance is largely dependent on our membership (which has been stable but not growing for some time) and the annual conference (which has a limitation of further growth as a standalone activity). We are fortunate to have accrued reserves in recent years that can support one-off investment in projects e.g. our new website. We must manage our finances so that we can continue to invest in this way to support our members and the wider public.

Our systems are adequate for a charity of our size, providing basic requirements, and employ strong financial risk management principles; they also entail opportunity costs owing to their lack of sophistication. Our financial spreadsheets, for example, require additional manual data handling to supply management information at a summary level.

## Recent developments & future trends

At the macro level, the scrutiny and regulation around charities generally – and fundraising in particular – is likely to become more intense; hence the "public benefit" and the efficient and effective management of the organisation need to be transparent.

At a micro level, increasing costs, particularly of professional services such as accounting, may result, if no action is taken, in our reserves deteriorating below our evaluated reserve requirement, hence impacting our viability. This is discussed in more detail in the section on finance and risks.

## Objectives

We need to diversify our sources of finance so we are less dependent on the financial performance of the annual conference. This includes both membership growth that, if sustained, provides a secure income stream, and also growth of income from events and other finance sources.

So far as growth is concerned, we need to expand staff resource to allow greater focus on development of the membership base.

We must also invest in more efficient internal systems to free up staff time on routine activities, whilst at the same time making our financial position more transparent in real time through better management information.

### **Objective 1: Ensure UKELA's governance and business operations at least meet – and generally exceed – regulators' requirements and advice**

We will review our fundraising and financial management strategy and develop a creative response that both improves management information and secures UKELA's future. Examples of alternative and innovative means of fundraising that will be looked at include bequests (an established option for revenue funding that we will look at by mid 2017) and crowd-funding, now fairly well-established in the charity sector and more suited to raising project costs.

### **Objective 2: Foster a culture and employment practices that support staff and volunteers in working collaboratively and creatively**

We have appointed a new part-time staff member in 2016 to allow existing staff to spend more time on development work. Funding beyond this period will be dependent on strong reserves or additional revenue, e.g. from membership growth.

Our operating manual and associated policies require periodic review; additional staff resource will allow time to be devoted to this important underpinning material.

### **Objective 3: Develop and maintain systems that allow UKELA to operate securely and responsibly as a virtual organisation**

We will explore options for an improved finance system by January 2017 and implement changes in time for the start of the calendar and financial year 2018.

## Measuring our success

Success in this area can be measured by the following outcomes:

- Staff are self-motivated and supported in their personal and professional development.
- Membership income increases by 10 to 20% over the strategy period. Dependency on annual conference income is materially reduced.
- Reserve requirements are achieved throughout the period.
- Financial systems are enhanced.
- Professional service costs are a lower proportion of total costs.

# Our Team

## Staff

UKELA's staff team is small, effective and efficient, delivering a large programme of activity with three part-time staff members who collectively provide 1.5 full-time equivalents of resource. We will recruit an additional part-time staff member in 2016 to improve team productivity and allow more focus on membership services and development.

## Volunteers

We are extremely fortunate to have a wide range of volunteers across our various networks. Providing operating guidance, staff support for activities and central resources such as our websites are all important in allowing our volunteer networks to operate professionally. Succession planning for Working Party and Regional Group Convenors is particularly important and we will give this greater focus in the plan period.

## Trustees & Officers

Our processes for electing and inducting Trustees, running Council meetings and ensuring Trustees as a whole are representative of UKELA's interests and membership are strong. Officers (Chair, Vice Chairs and Treasurer) fulfil a particularly important function in ensuring good governance. During the plan period we will improve our succession planning for Officer roles and ensure Trustee engagement with UKELA priorities is well-managed.

## Patrons

UKELA's Patrons give their time and expertise generously. They play an important role in raising UKELA's profile in the sector and in giving our events and activities credibility and a sense of occasion. We will review our Patron network in 2016 and seek to appoint additional Patrons to broaden our constituency.

# Our Partners

Partnerships offer an important means of allowing us to reach new audiences and deliver member services efficiently and effectively. Partnerships take many forms, from co-sponsored events with other membership organisations, to long-term relationships with our key sponsors, connections that provide us with pro-bono facilities and resources for our work, as well as links that enrich our know-how.

Existing partnerships will be nurtured and potential new partnerships investigated throughout the plan period. This has the potential to be a very large area of work. We will focus our efforts by linking partnership work to our theme for each year of the plan period and to our membership development and funding goals.

# Financial Resources & Risk Management

Our finance is largely dependent on our membership – which is not currently growing overall – and the annual conference and associated sponsorship – which has performed exceptionally well in 2013, 2014 and 2015, contributing significantly to our healthy reserve position.

Our financial planning for this strategy looks at trends in the main components of our income (net of related expenditure for the conference and events) and our expenditure for the period 2016 to 2020.

Key financial assumptions include our plans for membership growth (10% to 20% over the strategy period) and inflation (2% generally and 3% for staff-related costs). The model also builds in approved expenditure on projects for 2016 and makes modest provision for potential investment in other areas that is, as yet, uncommitted. An additional staff post of 0.4 FTE (2d per week) to provide general administrative and membership support has been approved for 2016. Our financial model allows us to look at a range of scenarios as key assumptions change.

The model includes our unrestricted reserves, using 2015 outturn as the baseline. It also assesses future reserves year on year using the new reserves policy adopted by Council in November 2015.

These projections show that we can live within our means and maintain our required reserves if we continue to achieve strong conference performance, secure modest membership increases and keep our staff team at current levels. If however we wish to develop the organisation through project-based initiatives and maintain increased staffing beyond 2016, we will need to achieve higher levels of additional membership, continued strong conference performance and unlock additional funding sources.

The value of this model is that it allows us to evaluate and plan for financial risk events and choose the appropriate scenario to reflect our context at any given point in the plan period.

UKELA has a sound risk management strategy, with our risk register being reviewed comprehensively by Trustees at least annually and with quarterly reports on an exception basis to Executive Committee. Our new reserves policy, adopted by Council in November 2015, estimates the financial impact of certain risks occurring and this forms an integral part of the calculation of our minimum required reserve fund. These processes will be continuously reviewed and, where necessary, enhanced, during the plan period.

# Implementation and Monitoring

UKELA has an annual work plan that sets out the detailed actions and outputs required to move progressively towards achievement of our aims. The work plan identifies responsibilities for Trustees, volunteers, and staff members.

UKELA's Executive Committee monitors progress against this plan at each of its meetings. Trustees receive a report on an exception basis at each Council meeting. We report publicly on our progress in our annual report and accounts.

# In Conclusion

The strategy has been developed with contributions from all parts of UKELA: Trustees, Patrons, members and volunteers, working parties, regional groups and staff. We are grateful for people's time, energy and vision.

This is a living document and will be integrated into each annual work plan. Comments and suggestions on how to adapt and improve it are welcome at any time. Please contact Operations Director, Alison Boyd, with your feedback on: [alison@ukela.org](mailto:alison@ukela.org)