

Report from the AGM held on 3rd June

The meeting took place at Europe House and via Zoom video-conference. 81 participants were present and the meeting was presided by AIACE-UK Chairman, Tom Kennedy.

The morning session consisted of a presentation by notable historian, Professor Geoffrey Roberts, who focused on his forthcoming book which would publish the letters of Kathleen Harriman, daughter of the US Ambassador to the USSR during the Second World War. The material was of unique historical interest with insights into the character and relationships of the Allied war leaders as well as the experience of life in Moscow during the war. Professor Roberts also touched on the little known intellectual interests of Joseph Stalin as documented in his book, 'Stalin's Library'. As concerns the current situation in Russia, the Professor shared his views and expressed his desire for a Ukrainian victory. A lively discussion ensued and the meeting warmly thanked the Professor for travelling from Ireland to address the meeting.

Business proceedings

1. Apologies for absence were received from Richard Hay, long time Chairman of AIACE-UK, and Emanuela Savoia, National Committee member.

2. Committee Report to the AGM

Tom Kennedy presented the report on behalf of the outgoing Committee, highlighting the work of AIACE-UK volunteers in assisting members as well as ensuring the smooth running of the organisation. He particularly noted the unusual pensions adaptation last year (see below), JSIS reimbursements of costs of care and the work done by the Committee to support members on EU Login in the light of the changes scheduled for 1 July. The full report had been distributed in advance to all members and was also available on the website. The meeting endorsed the report and thanked the Committee and other volunteers for their efforts.

3. Financial Report

Treasurer John Wiggins presented the 2024 accounts, noting the healthy annual surplus (£6162) and the positive state of our total net assets which were now £59992. This report had also been distributed to members and was endorsed by the meeting with thanks to John for his excellent work.

4. New National Committee

There had been 12 nominees, as below. The meeting unanimously approved their appointments to the 2025-26 Committee.

Andersen, Pernille
Clegg, Martin

Cornelius, Jane
Currall, Julian
Hocken, Michael
Huyton, Alan
Kennedy, Tom
Kent, Gail
McCann, Denis
Pyke, Belinda
Savoia, Emanuela
Wiggins, John

4. JSIS

Michael Hocken made a very useful presentation on JSIS reimbursement of the costs of care, whether domiciliary or nursing home. He pointed out that between 1 in 4 and 1 in 3 people found themselves needing nursing home care and so it was important to consider the implications and to prepare.

Nursing home care reimbursement rates were relatively generous, especially when compared to domiciliary care rates. The actual amount derived from an assessment of dependence, which was based on a Doctor's report. Even at the lowest level it was still possible to receive around 30% of costs.

Domiciliary care rates were means-tested and the amounts were capped. The reimbursement would be reduced if other allowances, eg attendance allowance, were being received.

Finally, Michael praised the work and commitment of the PMO Staff in Ispra, who worked with great understanding and compassion in managing the cases that came their way. On a proposal from a member, it was agreed that the Chairman write a letter of acknowledgement and thanks to the PMO colleagues concerned.

5. EU Login

Denis McCann made an interesting presentation, explaining why the Security Directorate of the Commission had taken the decision to end the so-called 'SMS challenge' used by pensioners to log in to the PMO online systems (JSIS Online etc). The Commission was under constant threat from hackers and the SMS Challenge represented a security weakness that could be exploited. Denis illustrated that there had been good progress among pensioners who used the PMO systems in changing to the new verification methods. However, there remained a significant residue of colleagues who had not yet made the necessary changes. The Committee was hard at work in helping individuals and hoped to set up a Helpdesk, based on the volunteers who had stepped forward for the training events held on the 28th and 29th April.

6. Pensions

Martin Clegg, Pensions Ambassador, recalled that the 2024 general increase in pensions totalling 8.52% in euro had included an element (1.2%) deferred to 1 April 2025 as the Moderation Clause had been triggered. While it was too soon to forecast accurately the likely adaptation for 2025 the signs were that there would be no intermediate increase and perhaps a small increase at the end of the year. This reflected the lower inflation rates prevailing in Belgium and Luxembourg. On current signs, it was unlikely that the exchange rate would differ significantly.

Martin drew attention to the availability of himself and Pernille Andersen as 'Pensions Ambassadors' in case of pensions queried or issues. Pernille was also the organisation's 'Survivors Ambassador' and was active in helping the spouses of newly deceased pensioners.

7. National Committee roles and responsibilities

After the AGM, the new Committee met briefly and agreed the following.

Chairman - Tom Kennedy
Vice Chairperson - Gail Kent
Secretary - Alan Huyton
Treasurer - John Wiggins
Membership team - Jane Cornelius, Emanuela Savoia
Connect and Vox - Belinda Pyke
Webmaster - Alan Huyton, Emanuela Savoia
JSIS Ambassador - Michael Hocken, John Claxton
Pensions Ambassador - Martin Clegg, Pernille Andersen
Legal Expert - Julian Currall
IT Expert - Denis McCann
Survivors Ambassador - Pernille Andersen
Delegates to Aiace Board - Tom Kennedy, Gail Kent
Alternates to Aiace Board - Belinda Pyke, Julian Currall

11th June 2025