bcs Belfast Branch
The Chartered Institute for IT

Annual General Meeting – BCS Belfast Branch
Chairman's Report
20th September 2016

Dear Colleagues,

I took up office as Chair of the Belfast Branch of the BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT, at the start of 2014 and I would like to formally put on record my thanks to all my colleagues on the Committee, and to the team from BCS Headquarters who have provided support over the past year.

This year has seen a refreshed drive to increase the relevance and value of the BCS to our membership across Northern Ireland. We continue to operate a very active branch with a series of successful high quality events throughout the year and once again we welcomed the Turing Lecture to Belfast in February 2016.

The Turing Lecture has become the flagship event of the Northern Ireland Science Festival and members from the local BCS branch committee played a major role supporting the event. Robert Schukai MBE, Head of Advanced Product Innovation at Thomson Reuters, spoke on the topic of 'The Internet of Me' and for the second time in a row the Belfast lecture attracted the largest audience across the UK. I am glad to report that the lecture will return to Northern Ireland on 23rd February 2017 when Dr Guruduth Bahavar, IBM Vice-President of Cognitive Computing, will deliver the lecture. Dr Bahavar leads the worldwide team creating Watson.

I'd like to thank a broad range of people who have given up their time to arrange a disparate range of events in 2015/2016. This past year has been very active with continuing support for the 'Explain Like I'm 5' series of talks at Farset Labs, the CV and Interview Skills event proved popular at the start of the year and we organised a joint summer networking event with ISACA.

The theme of diversity has been a key focus for me over the past three years and our May event was on 'Diversity in IT'. I'd like to personally thank the speakers who took time out of busy schedules to discuss this important issue. Fujitsu once again supported our local branch by arranging an event in November 2015 on 'Hybrid IT', which was very well received. Simon Cole, CTO at Automated Intelligence, was the speaker at the event in January on 'Raising the productivity bar with Office 365' and we also organised events on data protection, computing knowledge for teachers and the tour of the local BBC broadcasting studios in March proved popular.

The annual BCS Golf Day was once again held at Malone Golf Club and thanks to both John McCloy for arranging the event and eir Business for sponsoring an enjoyable day out.

There was no IT Professional and Young IT Professional of the Year event this year due to difficulties in obtaining a sponsor. However, the committee has already started to plan an event in 2017 to coincide with a celebration of the BCS Belfast Branch's 60th anniversary.

I'd like to recognise the efforts of colleagues on the local committee who give their time and efforts to attend meetings, organise events and liaise with BCS HQ. It has been a pleasure working with such a dedicated and committed team. Although we have delivered a very busy year of events, and the Digital/IT economy in Northern Ireland continues to attract attention in terms of inward investment and organic growth, membership numbers continue to decline. Although we remain a relatively large local branch within the BCS we need to work out how to attract new members from across the broad arena of the Digital/IT profession, offer them valued events and opportunities to grow as professionals and retain existing members.

Finally, it has been a pleasure serving as Chair of the Belfast Branch of the BCS. Having spent almost 3 years as the Chair of the local branch I have decided to step down. I will continue to support the work of the BCS in Northern Ireland and look forward to helping the new Chair deliver another successful year of events during 2016/2017.

Bill McCluggage

Chair of the Belfast Branch of the BCS
20th September 2016