

District Society Reform

The ICAEW has long been trying to find an effective way of integrating the activities carried out centrally with those carried out in the District Societies (“DSs”) and ensuring that members across the country have equal provision of services and similar opportunities of access. The conundrum has been to try to preserve the unique DS network and the attributes that mark out each from its neighbours, whilst trying to level-up, so that services available to members are not restricted by their geographical locations.

In 2019 a significant review and consultation took place, with BBH Past President, Julian Daly, chairing one of the groups, looking at the type of programmes that societies could offer and highlighting best practice in this area. As with many things, the pandemic delayed progress and implementation of this work, but last year pilots were launched to allow DSs to convert into Local Networks (“LNs”). The aim of these LNs is to free local member volunteers from the administration and risks that are inherent within some DS structures and spend more time and effort in working with the local Chartered Accountant community.

The DS network has grown up over the past 150 years or so and some DSs are fiercely independent. This is recognised by the ICAEW, as there is provision within the current proposals for those DSs that so wish to remain independent but operate on a similar footing to the LNs. The focus is to ensure that members are not disadvantaged by whichever path a DS chooses.

There are pros and cons of both choices and representatives of the BBH management committee have been liaising with the ICAEW and other DS representatives to fully understand the consequences of each route. The BBH management committee assessed the options and shared them with BBH’s active members at a meeting on 2 October. This was an opportunity for active members to discuss the proposals and feedback their thoughts. Points arising from that process inform proposals being put before the BBH members at an Extraordinary General Meeting on 15 November 2023. Members will have the chance to ask questions and vote on the proposals.

Throughout this process the focus is on trying to make provision for members in the local area that is most appropriate to their job roles and their stages in career development, alongside making best use of the resources of the ICAEW and the DSs.

All BBH members who have provided ICAEW with an email address and have given permission to use it for governance purposes will receive the formal Notice of EGM and can book to attend either in person or via a virtual link or by completing and returning a proxy form.