



## *Gemma Wilks FCA*

**Business Appointment:** Finance Director, Fourteenfish Limited

---

### **Personal introduction**

**Self employed, Lecturer, Full time Mother, Finance Director, Cyclist, Film Producer**

Having qualified in 2007 with KPMG I joined my husband running our IT business. Shortly after I also started lecturing in Accountancy at Portsmouth, Southampton and Winchester Universities. I then took a break from teaching to have children but continued to work with my husband who went on to set up another business with a local friend, providing appraisal services and online training to GPs. I am now Finance Director of our company FourteenFish Ltd.

In my free time I enjoy bike racing. This year I did the National Championships in Cyclocross and Hill Climbing. I hope to do the World Masters next year. I also like film making and have produced a couple of feature films and a short film.

My LinkedIn profile is here <https://www.linkedin.com/in/gemma-wilks/> and for my more personal posts my Twitter is here <https://twitter.com/gljwilks>

### **Your involvement with ICAEW**

**JPG, Southern District Society, Regional Sustainability Group, South West Female Forum**

Before having children I was involved in the Joint Professions Group as an institute representative. More recently I've become involved with the Southern District Society and will be the Sustainability representative going forward as part of the Regional Sustainability Group. I am also getting more involved in the ICAEW South West Female Forum now that meetings are online. Given my commitments as primary caregiver to our young children, attending in-person meetings for ICAEW activities has been tricky in the past. With the shift this year to online meetings I have been able to be far more active with the ICAEW and I look forward to carrying this momentum through into next year and beyond.

A few years ago I was interviewed by *Economia* magazine discussing my sporting and film making activities. This article can hopefully be viewed from the ICAEW.

## **Motivation and ability to be a member of Council**

### **Female Representative, Sustainability Advocate, Supporting Communities, Controversial (when required)**

I wish to be on the council to provide a female voice from within business as a working parent of young children. I am incredibly passionate about ensuring all voices are heard and hope to bring a diverse perspective to discussions.

Sustainability is very important to me. My efforts started more actively over 10 years ago when I had my first child and realised the impact every child born has on the planet. Small steps at that stage led to bigger ones as my knowledge for the subject grew, and a few years ago I ran the online environmental campaign Ban The Straw New Forest (<https://twitter.com/BanTheStraw>) which led to BBC TV and Radio interviews as well as opening the Volunteers Fair for the New Forest NPA and receiving an award from them at The New Forest Show in 2018. Now I wish to use my experience and passion to support the ICAEW with changing attitudes and practice within the membership and wider business community.

With women in particular feeling the pressures of managing their careers and family life I feel it is very important to have female representation on the Council. I am currently well placed to understand the pressures facing working women as well as being without children not that long ago, so I can well recall the pressures that impacted me as a young women in the profession. I intend to be open to hear the concerns of other women and take them to the Council for consideration.

Utilising our business skills, I strongly believe in supporting our own communities which I have done personally by being Chair of the local preschool for 2 years and now being involved in my children's school PTA. I also run a number of recycling schemes in the village and the second hand uniform supply to not only help educate on sustainability but also to save people money. Using my business and organisational skills to educate and set a positive example to future generations is very important to me and a responsibility I feel we should all share and action in a variety of forms.

I am not afraid to raise an issue, however controversial it may be. I'm good at considering a variety of opinions and backgrounds in my decision making process and feel I would be a good representative for a wide variety of members. I also like to be informed so am happy to independently research an issue to ensure I'm well informed. I am very motivated by value and ethical duty. I believe humanity should strive to be the best it can be and that isn't always measured in GDP.

I have excellent time management skills and have researched what will be required of me as a Council member from a time commitment point of view. I am confident I can meet the expectations.

## **Strategic focus**

### **Value from Membership, Willing to Question, Importance of Effective Education**

Over the last 10 years I've taken a bit of a back seat as an institute member due to having children. Beyond watching my membership fee creep up and up, to a level that made me consider resigning, I had minimal involvement. To be honest meetings going online due to Covid is what has saved my faith in my membership as I finally after 10 years felt I could get more involved whilst balancing the demands of young children.

Now this might concern you having me as a representative for you, but actually it should reassure you. Despite my lack of faith in the value I was receiving from the institute, I'm still here. But I'm not alone in my reservations and that is something that the Institute should be worried about. Apathy and disinterest amongst the membership is a concern but I feel a perceived lack of value from membership is a bigger concern and one I would like to help address. This issue impacts members throughout the world. It's impact can also spread to the accountancy profession at large whether it be by potential ICAEW members choosing to train with a competitor, or in fact people choosing to by pass the professional qualifications completely and pursue it from a different angle starting as a book keeper.

My knowledge in this area is still developing, but my skills in questioning things that perhaps people don't like to question, are great attributes for being on the Council. I'm currently making a feature documentary which has the interest of an international sales agent. I've had to learn how to ask questions and encourage answers out of people - some of which are shy or really don't want to step forward.

I'm also finance director of a very successful business which has seen year on year growth in terms of financials and staff numbers, creating jobs for people living in more rural areas who don't always want to commute into business districts but want jobs where they have responsibility and development opportunities. A core element of our business is providing training for medical GPs both qualified and unqualified. I'm very aware of the importance of training and continued development.

As a university lecturer I had good insight into what methods worked and engaged students, and those that were perhaps less successful.

I also had the joy of homeschooling my two young children through the first lockdown. Whilst this may seem trivial to some it highlighted the challenges that educators can have, but also that students can have. The emotional reaction they may have to educational challenges. The need to balance it with physical exercise and a nutritious diet. All elements we mustn't underestimate when expecting people to go through rigorous learning and assessment processes.

Since this is such a key part of the ICAEWs role I do think my varied experience in this area places me well to input to Council discussions.

## **Communication with members in your constituency**

### **Approachable, Sociable, Mental Health Discussion**

I like to think I'm a very approachable and social person, whether that be by email, telephone or in person.

Whilst in person is going to be trickier in the foreseeable future, I'm always happy for people to drop me an email or give me a call. I can also be available to jump on video calls as sometimes it can help to have a friendly face to communicate with.

I have a wide range of interests which I can bring to discussions to help people feel at ease and have a more rounded conversation, whilst exploring their concerns about specific issues.

Mental health is incredibly prevalent in society and shouldn't be underestimated within our profession. There are so many degrees that people can be impacted by it. I certainly have blue days, definitely more so having become a parent! We shouldn't shy away from this discussion and I want members in my constituency to know I'm here for them to approach with their concerns, and I will do my best to help them. I want to make sure I support across the constituency and in particular members that perhaps don't have the employer structure to rely on. Sole practitioners, people on career breaks and those in more senior/singular roles can feel the professional world is a lonely place and I want to try and engage those members who might feel a bit more disjointed from the institute.

I have a good social media presence and can be approached in that manner too.

### **Nominators**

Caroline Griffiths

Claire Foote

Richard Cartwright

Ailsa Burkimsher

Nina Lutley

## *Declaration of interests which are relevant to the business of ICAEW*

Membership of, or interests in, formal bodies or groups, including other professional bodies:	None that I think would impact my role on the Council.
Membership of ICAEW Council, ICAEW Boards and other ICAEW committees:	Regional (South and South West) Sustainability Group Southern District Society ICAEW South West Female Forum
Partnerships, Directorships or beneficial interests in companies:	FourteenFish Ltd Fruity Ltd
Professional or social relationships with individuals who have business relationships or who compete with the ICAEW:	None that aware of
Any other matters you feel should be identified:	None that aware of