

## **IHIE: SOUTH WEST BRANCH**

### **Diane Ware IEng, Highway Maintenance Engineer, Wiltshire CC**

Diane attributes the long-standing success of IHIE's SW Branch to the commitment and sustained activity of its Committee. There is continuous attention to providing practical support to members. The Branch is an important way for IHIE to meet members' professional needs, e.g. through professional review workshops, technical meetings, and more informal advice through the networks the Branch creates, and through mentoring.



"IHIE has been well presented" by the Branch, according to Diane, and the committee works hard to promote it to younger members, and further their careers. "We email all the time" as committee members, and hold whole day planning meetings.



Committee meetings are generally held in Exeter, and review meetings in Taunton. The "leg of lamb" shape of the Branch, which stretches to Land's End, means that careful thought has to be given to where to hold CPD events, and how best to balance members' travel possibilities.



In setting up meetings, the Branch draws on all the local resources and, for example, works jointly with IHT where that will benefit the most people.

The choice of content for CPD meetings is crucial: topicality is important, as well as good speakers. E.g. the Road Deaths Manual is something that has attracted a lot of interest because of public concern about perceived lengthy delays in getting traffic moving after such events.

One very practical and memorable involvement of the Branch recently was its participation in the Boscastle Seminar, held to review the major flash flooding event there, in partnership with IHT and the ICE.

Diane is very active herself, and is currently mentoring three candidates for IEng, having already seen two succeed. She is clear about it being something everyone should aspire to achieve, not least because of the tremendous boost to personal self-esteem it can provide to put the effort in, and to gain recognition for it. This sense of achievement, she feels, can be as important as the actual practical results of having a widely respected qualification in the job market.

The number of women coming in to the profession is slowly increasing, but more generally, although there is a reasonable uptake of places on engineering courses, by both sexes, the number then entering the profession is not good. The Branch "is trying to help Colleges to rectify this, but more needs to be done".

In this context, Diane feels that Local Authorities are less supportive of IEng level requirements than consultants, and there is some migration to the latter now taking place. Overall, she believes that highway engineering in all its guises offers a great career, one that should be better promoted to young people.