

## June Council Rapporteur from Marc Cashmore



So who am I and why am I writing this report on the Institute of Highway Engineers Council and Annual General Meeting? Well, I am Marc Cashmore and I've worked for local highway authorities and consulting engineers on and off since 1987. Whilst I graduated way back in 1994 and have been a longstanding Graduate Member, like so many others out there I have done little to actively participate or progress professional membership further. It is easy to just immerse yourself in the day job but there has always been a nagging thought in my mind that I really ought to do more. So when the request for Graduate and Student representatives to stand on Council was issued earlier this year I thought to myself that it was about time to step forward. Considering I have some twenty years of industry experience you may not think I am the archetypal graduate representative but as it turns out that is less important than you might guess. I work for Mouchel and the company were kind enough to provide support for me to attend during working hours which is appreciated in these times of close economic scrutiny.

Not being able to travel the night before, the journey up from Bath to headquarters at Russell Square by motorbike took quite a while. I eventually got to the Membership and Qualifications Committee meeting but wasn't the last to arrive as some others also struggled with transport to our capital city base on the day. Whilst formal in nature the meetings were friendly and other members very welcoming. Immediately it became apparent that the IHE is facing some very serious challenges, changes and upheaval. This is reflected in other professional bodies too as any drop in employment during a recession is going to be mirrored in the institutions those employees would have been members of. So it was heartening to go through around fifty individuals that had also made the effort to become new reviewers, apply for upgraded membership, become new members and gain approval for EngTech, IEng and CEng. That shows there is still a positive outlook despite the dire economic challenges forced upon the Highway sector over the last couple of years.

Frank and open discussion was held over the proposed new structure for running IHE and how the committee would fit into that going forward. This would feed into the further discussion at AGM and Council later in the day.

Moving on to the AGM after lunch the usual run through of accounts, membership fee setting and auditors approval you would expect ran smoothly, with agreement unanimously in most cases. The biggest issue seemingly the fact that despite maintaining a fairly static membership a little below 3000 in number; IHE has been running at a loss over the last two years. Much of that is down to scaling back in events and conferences it would seem which had provided significant financial support. So like pretty much every other organisation at the moment, changes are needed to redress things before reserves are used up. It was very apparent that the committee members and Council were making swift moves to help and assist with many options being explored to ensure the IHE maintains its size and status well into the future. These issues were expanded on during the subsequent full Council meeting, my third and final one of the day.

All change was the nub of the main Council meeting discussion. There is no question that there is likely to be a new structure for managing the IHE in the very near future, Council and committee meetings will move around the regions, the main overhead costs will be scrutinized again such as how London headquarters is used and a rejuvenated modern institute should result. There is no wish to become subsumed by another professional body but that is not to say the remit and how we work with other organisations should not change also. A business plan will likely result from our current position, wider recognition of the recently re-branded IHE and further improvements in communication with members.

My nightmare journey up to the first Council meeting may not be repeated it seems!

Far from being the staid and stuffy organisation of years gone by, IHE Council will change and modernise things the way you would want and expect in the current climate. This is largely because the members are just like you and I and so have no separate agenda to work to. I was really pleasantly surprised at how dynamic and open to change the Council was and am happy to thank those other volunteers that have been quietly giving their time and expertise to make sure your IHE not only survives but blossoms.

So expect big changes soon in how the IHE is organised and run and above all if you can get involved yourself don't be shy to step forward and get involved.