

www.soe.org.uk

The SOE's new website is not only a useful information resource, but an online conduit to problem-solving, careers... Gareth Jenkins, editor of *Operations Engineer*, explains

Looking for technical information, best practice or guidance notes? Just want to be kept abreast of industry and technology news as it might affect you? Or maybe you want to review that feature from a back issue of *Plant Engineer*, but can't remember the date or title – just the subject? For all of the above and a lot more, visit the new www.soe.org.uk.

We hope you have noticed something of a transformation at the SOE's website. Your society has been working hard to make the online world work better for you – to make finding what you need as easy as possible, and all from the privacy

of your own desktop. But if you haven't looked, or you're not sure how to drive the site, here are some pointers to get you started as quickly as possible.

Beyond the basics (see panel), I'd like to draw your attention to the blue strip at the top of the home page, which provides links to the sections of the website we feel are of most use to members and potential members.

'Join SOE', for example, is the page to show friends and colleagues thinking of joining a professional engineering society, or seeking to register with ECuk. On the left, you'll find the 'apply today' link, which takes you to the five easy steps for SOE membership application. Other associated pages detail who should join and the various membership classes.

As a member, you'll also have access to the 'members' area' (after registering the first time, this just requires your email address and membership number), which provides technical information, the discussion forums and links to articles from previous issues of *Plant Engineer*.

Online problem-solving

The discussion forum is proving particularly popular: if you're looking to network, or simply ask a question about something technical, it's ideal. You can visit the forum from the homepage by clicking 'members' area' and then 'discussion forum' on the left. Current discussion threads range from assistance with EngTech registration to problems with vibrating generators.

Before posting a technical enquiry, you may wish to check out the database of technical information. A box on the right of the members' area provides further reading lists and links to other useful websites on subjects ranging from computers to health and safety, and management. For those occasions when we don't have the answer, chances are we'll know someone who does.

Meanwhile, if you're looking for your next career move, go to the site's jimfinder (jobs in manufacturing finder) page. From the members' area, click 'careers and training' followed by 'career opportunities'. Clicking on 'plant engineering vacancies' takes you to the live job search.

Then, if you want to find out what's going on in the real world, the regional network link at the top of the page takes you to the pages of the regional groups and BES (Bureau of Engineer Surveyors)



regions. You can select either all the SOE's professional sectors or just your own – but remember, as a member, you're entitled to visit all of the events. Once you've selected your sector and clicked 'search network', by clicking on the name of your local engineering community, you'll find the dates of its upcoming events. The contact information for your local chair, treasurer and secretary are also on this page.

Back to the blue bar – and the next link is for news. Here you'll find bulletins on the latest SOE and professional sector happenings. By clicking on the word 'news', you're taken to the section's front page. This shows the latest stories from all three sectors, as well as items that affect the whole SOE. Clicking on any headline takes you to the whole story – with highlighted words providing instant routes to further relevant information.

News and archives

If you're after news purely for your sector, then top left of the page provides the links, with stories being replicated from Operations Engineer, Plant Engineer and Transport Engineer. These are the latest stories, but you can also find news from the past couple of years under 'news archive' on the left. If you're after something specific, and know roughly when it was published, you can filter the search by dates and keywords.

If, for example, you want news about Blackburn from this year, choose January 2007 to August 2007, key 'Blackburn' in the 'and/or keywords' box and then click 'search'. The results show two stories from the Blackburn branch, detailing recent talks on cotton production and fire investigation.

A news subscription service is also available, delivering news to your email inbox. This will form the basis for the SOE's new e-newsletter, due to




launch later.

Aside from local news and events, the SOE also operates as a national body. By clicking 'national events' in the blue bar, you'll find the list of upcoming events the SOE is either running or participating in.

Finally, also on the blue bar is the link to the Society's publications. Articles from Plant Engineer and Transport Engineer, Operations Engineer (from 2004 to present) and the technical guides can be viewed here. The left-hand links provide direct access to each publication, as well as a list of its upcoming features and key contacts.

You may find the magazine intends to run something on a subject to which you would like to contribute – such as waste management or lubrication. Brian Tinham, the editor of Plant Engineer, is more than happy to hear from you, so email him.

With information being added on a weekly basis to the site, it's worth checking it out regularly. If you have any suggestions, feel free to email editor@soe.org.uk. 



Web basics

The SOE's website at www.soe.org.uk has been designed to make searching easy: we undertake to get the information you need within five clicks of the mouse.

For example, to find the SOE's new president Ian Ling, you can click the 'governance' link at the top of the page, which takes you to the society's principal officers. Clicking on the image of Ian, or his name, takes you to a form for contacting him.

Now this may, or may not, be what you're after. If it is – job done, and you can fill in the form, click 'send' and Ian will receive your message. If, however, this is not what you're after, it may be worth searching the documents on the website.

At the top of every SOE web page is a Google search bar. If you type 'Ian Ling' into the search bar and press return, you'll get every document that contains the words 'Ian' and 'Ling'. This could, however, include documents written by another Ian, such as Ian Chisholm, head of technical services and licensing,

containing the word 'Ling'. If you only require documents referring to Ian Ling, then putting the search in quote marks ("Ian Ling") directs Google to give you just that.

Next to the Google search bar, on the same line as the 'governance' link, are three other links. 'About SOE' gives you a brief rundown of the society's history. The 'contact us' page does exactly what it says, and lists phone numbers, email addresses, fax numbers or postal address for the SOE head office.

This section of the site also provides a street map for the head office in London. Remember, this is your building and, if you're in London and would like to come in and use the Internet and coffee facilities, the staff will be more than happy to assist you.

Back to the main page – and the last link at the top is the 'site map'. Rather than being an orienteering resource, this is the online equivalent of a contents page. Clicking here reveals which parts of the SOE website are accessible to everyone, which to members only (denoted by the letter R) and which can only be accessed by the trustee board, professional sector councils and elected officers.