

Fit for the future

Closure of the regional branch structure of the SOE IPlantE professional sector heralds a new and exciting beginning for professional development. IPlantE chair Steve Catte explains

Pointers

- For those who may be interested in joining our volunteers, here's a brief job spec:
- to have communication facilities of email and phone
- to act as local area knowledge base for event locations
- to offer suggestions regarding suitability of event topics in discussion with other volunteers and HQ technical services
- to commit to support local events
- to be self-motivated

On 1 May 2007, following a request from the IPlantE council and confirmation by the SOE board, the formal branch structure of the IPlantE professional sector was formally withdrawn.

This decision has been one of the hardest and most significant for plant engineers since the formation of the SOE. On the one hand, losing a long-standing and formerly popular infrastructure was sad. But, on the other, building a new environment, able to meet the modern professional development requirements of the membership, is exciting and full of hope.

Professional development will now be provided by a programme of regional technical events, under the operational control of the professional SOE staff and supported by volunteers from the regional areas. This new system is intended to be flexible in its approach to types and location of the technical events, allowing it to develop to suit the requirement of our members.

For our first year under the new system, technical events have been scheduled for the North East, North West & North Wales, Southern and Midlands areas. Scotland is in our sights for the near future.

Getting it right

Two events – the first in the North East in March, on renewable energy, and the second in the North West & North Wales in April, on CDM 2007 – proved effective pilots and attracted 40-plus attendees each. Feedback showed that investment in excellent venues, professional AV and

presentations on key current technical matters are the way to go.


Formal recognition within continuing professional development (CPD) schemes was also confirmed. Indeed, the standard of our new professional development activities is targeted at supporting more stringent requirements in CPD and revalidation of registration grades with EC UK, should these arise. Progress within the engineering profession is a slow, but methodical process, and it is the intention of the IPlantE council to make every effort to ensure that the infrastructure within the SOE is able to support its membership with respect to CPD going forward.

Many of our past branches provided activities that were essentially social in nature, rather than concerned strictly with professional development. These activities (for example, dinner dances, dinner lectures, visits to historical and/or industrial places of interest) can continue under the banner of IPlantE, with local organisation by local responsible people. They must, however, be conducted without prejudice to the charitable status of SOE, and must also be notified to (and have agreement of) the head of technical services. Publication and reporting facilities within Operations Engineer and Plant Engineer, where applicable, will be made available to the organisers.

In addition to regional events, professional development can be obtained from our publications and web site. These too will be receiving further development to support our membership and keep our organisation advancing.

Finally, during my contact with our membership, questions have been raised regarding the Institution of Plant Engineers Benevolent Fund. For clarity, I would like to pass on the following information. The current almoner system is functional and supports the activities of the fund.

The fund is an independent charity with its own management committee, but a communication route is available via SOE IPlantE and Wendy Shell at HQ. The formal agreement and goodwill between the SOE/IPlantE and the fund is active and continues to be honoured in all respects.

So there we have it: new professional development facilities, social activities, interesting visits, all waiting for a proactive membership to participate in and enjoy. Come and join us! 

Steve Catte (right), IPlantE chair, at the Oval: a new innings

