



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Working for Safety on the Road

It has been a huge honour to have been AIRSO Chairman for 2007. It has also been great fun, extremely interesting, and very busy. But then I would be very worried if AIRSO didn't have a busy year!

This year has also been tinged with sadness with the passing away of Trevor Ford, Christopher Bullock MBE and Ted Clements MBE who all made such valuable contributions to AIRSO and to the world of road safety as a whole. We will miss them all, both as professional colleagues and as personal friends.

Our five General Meetings kicked off with the one incorporating the AGM in January, at the Driving Standards Agency Training Establishment, Cardington. The March meeting took place at Loughborough University and the July meeting was hosted by Bruton School for Girls in Somerset. September saw us at Bickenhill Fire Station in Birmingham and finally our November meeting was at West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters.

We held three Road Safety Seminars hosted by RoSPA at their Headquarters in Birmingham and we also went west to the Devon Drivers' Centre near Exeter, and East to Lincolnshire Police Headquarters.

Topics covered across our various forms of 'get-togethers' ranged from work-related road risk to driver psychology to operator licensing to highways and vehicle technology innovations and the list could go on.

I would like to thank all our hosts for the effort that goes into arranging the venues and for their hospitality – we have been fed well this year! I must also thank all our speakers for their massive contribution to the success of all our meetings and seminars.

My Chairman's 'mission' this year, as I had recently moved to Carmarthenshire from Essex, was to introduce AIRSO into Wales and to increase our membership in the Principality. I am pleased to report on the success of the mission. Back in February we held a Welsh Members networking luncheon in Carmarthen, and liaison meetings with Meryl James at Welsh Assembly Government and Steve Baker of RoSPA Wales.

From these meetings the first AIRSO Conference in Wales was sketched out, and the 18th July saw the AIRSO Road Safety Conference Wales take place at The Angel Hotel in Cardiff. I must thank Meryl James, Steve Baker, the IAM and Norwich Union for their support in this venture, and a personal thank you to Sue Cooper and Colin Pettener for working so very hard on the day, enabling me to do the 'good hostess' bit and mix with the delegates.

This Conference is now to become an annual event and in 2008 will focus on 'Work-Related Road Safety' and the new Corporate Manslaughter Act and its implications for employers.

I am also pleased to announce that the membership in Wales has increased to 34.

The challenge now is to increase the success of this Conference to the level of the National Blue Light Users Conference but it will be a real challenge to follow in Robert Jackson's footsteps! I'd like to take this opportunity to wish Robert a happy retirement from chairing this Conference. The future plan is now to appoint from within the AIRSO Membership a different Conference Chairman each year, moving it around the emergency services. The Council of Management has supported the principle that such a person would be an AIRSO Member and would also have previously been a delegate at the Conference. I welcome Owen Lower MAIRSO, Senior Driving Instructor from the Suffolk Constabulary who will be Conference Chairman for 2008.

I have also had the privilege this year of dining at the House of Commons with some very prestigious dinner partners and discussing the future of motorway service stations between courses – well that is what we were supposed to be discussing, but as all good road safety people do, we digressed onto all sorts of other road safety issues - fatigue, road surfaces and signage, young drivers, lorries, licensing, road pricing and driving for work to name but a few – we could have done with a few more courses really!

I represented AIRSO as a guest at the new Road Safety EXPO 2007 – a conference with a difference! Also at the PACTS lecture and dinner I was inspired to look at how those associated with other forms of transport have tackled similar safety issues to those we face.

- This year has also seen the development of our 'new-look' website with its much more modern and fresh look – thank you to Nick Stilwell for sponsoring it and to Ian Kemeys for the design and maintenance;
- the introduction of the Fellowship level of membership;
- and the introduction of 'breakfast networking' meetings.

A big thank you has to go to all the people who work so hard on the various committees, and to our portfolio holders.

The Council of Management meets three times a year and this year have varied the venue, so thank you to Ed Handley, Bob Smalley at RoSPA Birmingham and all the staff at Cardiff Bus for providing excellent meeting facilities. The workload is quite heavy for just three meetings per year, but we streamline this by having electronic debates to thrash out issues before and between meetings, thus preventing too much deferring and enabling us to reach final decisions at our meetings. Because I have a son studying at University I don't tend to get near my PC until late at night, and will often post my opinion on an issue way after midnight. You'd be surprised however, how often a reply comes winging back to me in the early hours from other Council Members who must also still be up, or 'doing road safety in their sleep' perhaps?

The Road Safety Group too, has a huge (but very interesting) workload and this year, particularly with the new Road Safety Act now in force, has had a massive number of consultation documents to read and comment on – they too have had to find more efficient ways of managing the quantity of work.

And that is what makes AIRSO so special - everybody voluntarily as per our strapline, 'working for safety on the road' and working so very hard. Nobody is 'sent' to represent their employer or organisation – we are all here because we share a common goal and want to be here. No other association that I know of has such a breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and experience across just about every road safety and associated discipline.

So thank you to all the membership for your support, your attendance at the meetings, seminars and conferences, and for renewing your membership! We are a charity and as such rely mainly on our subscriptions for funding. We hope you feel we give 'value for money'. We would like you all to encourage friends and colleagues to become members. It's an 'all-win' situation – the association benefits from increased membership, you will personally benefit from sharing knowledge and best practice, statutory authorities benefit by using us as a 'sounding board' and the end-product - road users - should benefit from safer roads and well thought-out strategies.

A major advantage of joining is being able to learn about other road safety disciplines – if, for example you are in education, training and publicity you probably wouldn't be able or allowed to take time out to attend a seminar on traffic management or engineering, but because we mix our agendas, move the meetings around the UK and use top quality speakers speaking on current topics, it gives everybody the opportunity to understand aspects of road safety outside their own discipline and to network with practitioners, policy makers and strategy developers at all levels.

And that's what makes me so very proud to have had the privilege of chairing AIRSO this year. It's a special organisation, full of special people, working professionally and tirelessly, together but in different ways for a very special cause – preventing death and injury on our roads.

Finally, I would like to thank my employers Carmarthenshire County Council, for allowing me time-out to attend the various events and meetings, all my colleagues on the Council of Management for their support and guidance, my Vice Chairman Mike Ambrose, Bill Bailey our Treasurer for his ever watchful eye on our finances and a very special thank you to Graham Feest, not only for the effort he puts into organising all our events, the administration of the association and sending out the very informative e-mail communications, but also for managing my diary and itinerary, and for his constant nagging to ensure I met all my deadlines.

Thank you all.

Lyn Morris MAIRSO
Chairman 2007