

SGUK as 2020 ends and 2021 starts – hopes for the future

Norman Stevenson, Chair SGUK

Where to begin? I refer primarily to the Chairman's Annual Report for 2020 where I stated that the current Coronavirus Pandemic has caused us problems, just like every other organisation and person in the world – no point in repeating what I said; it is there for all of you to read on our website. I will mention however that, I, as most of us are, am delighted that there are now vaccinations to combat this horrendous infection showing the world that there is light at the end of the tunnel for us, and us includes SGUK and I can honestly say that with a background in deep mining, lights at ends of tunnels means so much, and gives us hope.

I'd like to chat next about our recent AGM and the changes that meeting brings. Myself as Chair, and Dr Bob Rajan as Vice Chair, along with long standing Board member Philip Grundy all stood down at the end of our scheduled Terms of Office. I am delighted to say that both Bob and I were re-elected on to the Board and will both continue with the positions previously held. Unfortunately, Philip was not re-elected. At this juncture, I would normally thank Philip for his dedication and support over the years and wish him well for the future, however; he was offered and accepted a co-opted position, so we haven't seen the last of him.

We welcome two new members on to the Board, Steve Mullock and Sanjeev Kumar. Sanjeev is brand new to SGUK, but his company has been working closely with South & West Wales Safety Group for some time, and he brings expertise that most of us old codgers don't have and will hence be an important asset going forward. Steve comes back to the board after standing down a few years ago, during which time he did some tremendous work for us behind the scenes as a co-opted member. We also retained the services of Jane Murdoch (Chair of SCOS); David Jones (President of North Lincs Group) as co-opted members and warmly welcome Sarah Kenny from Construction Publications as a co-opted member. David Bishop was unable to attend the AGM due to illness so his continuance as a co-opted member is still to be confirmed. We wish David a speedy recovery. To finish off talking about the board, I want to thank Adam Young from Arco who stood down from the board due to business commitments, his time with us was extremely productive and welcome.

Finally (unless I remember later something else I want to say), I wish to re-emphasise my hopes, dreams and expectations for SGUK as depicted at my election to the Chair in 2007. Again, you can read what I said on the website so will not repeat. I talked about change of direction and the way we do things, bringing as an example, non group representatives on to the board (after changing the constitution and getting it sanctioned by the Charity Commission). This for me was a massive step forward.

We started on a journey of change in terms of the awards – massive improvements have been made, but more changes are planned to make them even better. I always like to take the positives out of negative situations whenever possible. The Coronavirus situation is a massive negative, but the required restriction we now have to comply with, gives us the opportunity to make even more positive change. There are no awards this year, hence no ceremony in 2021, but we will be ready for a re-launch at a ceremony in 2022. Work will be ongoing during 2021 by the Awards Working Party in terms of award entries, working with judging teams etc. Further details will be provided as and

when it is available. Another change, this time forced on us by the pandemic is the way we hold meetings, the Board and MAC meeting held in April via Teams worked very well, the recent AGM via Teams in terms of attendance was good. It didn't however allow us to showcase any particular group or supporting organisation as we had done very successfully the two previous years, but it gives us thought for the future when we can do 'face to face' – I see face to face meetings coupled with additional participants on a video conferencing platform starting hopefully by the end of 2021.

The last couple of change examples are enough just now and what I would like to focus on next are the various Working Parties. I mentioned before that some have been very productive, but others have not. The productive ones I want to keep as they are in terms of WP members for now, those being Awards; Documentation Review; and Social media: The others unfortunately have not been quite as productive albeit, a lot of work is evident from a small number of people. To that end, I intend for the 'Officers' (Bob Rajan, Alan Gunn and myself to chair individual Teams meetings with the current WPs to try and establish what is and what isn't working – this will not be a witch hunt or criticism of any individuals, it is in essence an investigation to find out the facts and attempt to address and rectify the problems. We will have a video meeting between the 3 office bearers hopefully before the end of the year to establish the parameters of the meetings with the WPs.

Just a quick word to the Co-opted members, you are very welcome on board, and you are no doubt aware that you weren't co-opted to be a passenger, the way the constitution is worded, appropriate people are identified as having special qualities and expertise that we require and are constitutionally co-opted for specific purposes, you are not here because we like you (we do of course), but are here to work on specific projects or be members of a working party. Can all of you please have a think and come back to me with your ideas, and which working parties you would like to be involved with, or even lead.

Finally (this time maybe) I want to thank the voting members for my re-election to the Chair for a second term (I've either done something right or no one else wants the job), but by focusing on the positive again, I feel as though I have been given a vote of confidence to continue the programme of change I first mentioned in 2017, and at the same time improve the service we provide to those we serve. I also emphasise the welcome to our new Board members, Co-opted members, and hopefully through time new Supporters and Sponsors. By the way, I haven't forgotten the financial problems we face going forward: if we do not gain more financial support, particularly for the future of the awards – as our Treasurer mentioned at the AGM, we only have enough money to support us for the next year or two at the very most, we should all appreciate that and if you know of any person or organisation looking to sponsor our awards or an organisation like ours, don't wait, let us know immediately so that either the office bearers or specified WP can pursue the lead appropriately.

I'm not going to finish on a negative, we now have vaccines for COVID-19, we can look forward to an eventual successful future, because I know that the new Board will support as they should and help make us even more successful than we are and have been in the past. I wish every reader and everyone else a very Merry Christmas, a Guid New Year and a prosperous 2021 and I look forward to meeting you all again soon. My contact details are on the website, and I am always happy to discuss SGUK and local Groups, so feel free to call if you want to discuss anything, or simply want to blather.

*N Stevenson*

Norman Stevenson

Chair SGUK

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