

**SCQS**  
**PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER STATEMENT – MARCH 2010**

I have now completed the first 18 months of my 2 year presidency and have thoroughly enjoyed my term so far. It has been, for me, a time of making new contacts and forging new relationships with members of our own society, other societies, government departments and academia.

As a society we have also spread our net more widely with a representative, Sion Evans, on the JCT working group and are currently looking for a representative to sit on the RICS QS Professional Group Board as the Public Sector representative.

From the point that I succeeded to this office I was keen to appoint a Vice President to make for a smoother transition when I hand over the presidency in October. I am happy to report that Jonathan Bemrose of NPS North East has accepted this role. Jonathan, as a current council member, has a good understanding of the requirements of the role and I am sure that he will make an excellent president when I stand down.

One of the bees in my presidential bonnet has been the way that measurement is taught, or not taught, in our universities and I was encouraged when I attended a workshop on the RICS New Rules of Measurement to see that a number of universities were represented,

I also visited my local university, the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN), to discuss how they currently teach measurement and how they will incorporate the New Rules of Measurement (NRM) into the curriculum. I discovered that the course tutors have already brought the first volume of NRM into their professional practice modules and intend to introduce measurement related to the procurement volume when it is published; whilst remaining conscious of its uptake within the industry was heartening, bearing in mind our previous debates on the subject, to find that the teaching of measurement is still seen as a key component of the degree course, if somewhat diluted from my student days.

To highlight the importance of measurement as a Quantity Surveying discipline UCLAN has agreed to instigate the SCQS student award and it will be presented at their next prize giving ceremony. The prize will be awarded to the best performing student in the measurement module. We have awarded SCQS prizes at a number of universities now, which has raised our profile in the academic arena and has increased awareness amongst students who are the future of our organisation.

Our new web-based whole life costing system was launched in September 2009 and Professor John Kelly gave a presentation about the system at our conference in October. John, via his company Axoss has developed the system in conjunction with Marcus Gronqvist of Value Solutions and the Society has entered into a Joint Venture Agreement with both their companies to market and sell the product.

The uptake for subscription to the service has been, initially, slow. However, with a little influence from council member Alan Jones, Partnerships for

Schools have expressed an interest in using SCQS's web-based system as a possible way of encouraging Local Authorities to adopt a whole life costing approach in relation to BSF schemes.

Any members who are interested in the new system can access it from the SCQS web-site and opt for a trial. Feedback on trials so far has been that the trial period of 1 month is insufficient to gain a full appreciation of the system's capabilities. Consideration was given at the last Council meeting to extending the trial period to 3 months for which we are seeking agreement from our partners.

As a spin off from the Whole Life costing system, we have had the website completely refreshed and upgraded and it looks and feels so much better for a lick of paint and some new furniture.

Membership of the Society is, generally, in decline. We have lost members in all categories, with a nett result that there are 20 fewer members now than when I became President, a decline of over 10%. Arresting this decline becomes more difficult as property services in the public sector come under increasing pressure. We have lost many members because their organisations simply no longer carry a Quantity Surveying function. I would appeal to all of you to try to persuade heads of Quantity Surveying teams in your neighbouring authorities who are not members to join the Society.

As many of you know, SCQS formed a partnership with the Construction Confederation to develop and manage the National Schedule of Rates (NSR). However, in December 2009, the Companies Court ordered the winding-up of the Construction Confederation.

SCQS believes that, as partners, we should at least have at least a say in the choice of partner. A successful bidder with whom we could not work would place the liquidator in difficulties.

Events on this front are moving quickly and it was agreed at the last Council meeting that Robert Bates, Alan Forsyth, Brian Kirkham (as Chief Executive) and I (as President) should make decisions to protect the best interests of the society. As I write, we are in dialogue with the liquidator but he still is proceeding with the procurement of bids for the Construction Confederation's interest in NSR.

The annual conference was held at Kenwood Hall in Sheffield at the end of October 2009 and was, I felt, a great success. The venue and facilities were very good and the speakers were all engaging and informative. Although attendance on the afternoon of the first day could perhaps have been better, the second day was well attended. I must reiterate my thanks to the to the council members who assisted with the organisation of the annual conference, especially our Chief Executive, Brian Kirkham, whose hard work and enthusiasm keeps the pulse of the SCQS beating strongly and made the success of the conference possible.

Brian has already set the wheels in motion for this year's conference. As it will be my last conference before passing on the chain of office I passed on some ideas of possible venues on the Lancashire side of the Pennines and, subsequent to Brian's investigations, the Last Drop in Bolton was selected, at the last Council meeting, to host this year's conference.

Brian is also looking for topics for the conference and suggestions for speakers. Suggestions from members are welcome, particularly if you have personal experience of topics and speakers. The recently circulated questionnaire regarding members' views on the conference has resulted in some minor changes being considered based on the feedback.

Finally, I know, from personal experience, that most public sector organisations are under severe financial scrutiny and that, regardless of results of the general election, pressure will continue to be applied to make savings. The maintenance and development of property portfolios and its relatively high capital cost will always be a target for those savings. Many of us have been through such times before and, with resourcefulness and resilience came through it, changed in some ways perhaps, but still capable of providing a quality service. I wish you all well in these uncertain times and, as I can already see glimmers of light on the horizon in my own organisation, hope that the future sees us all prosper.