

AGM speech – Sean McCormack

I would like to open my comments by thanking Felix for his commitment and attention to the Office of the President. I have enjoyed working alongside him and his predecessors during my time as an Officer of the Society.

Changing market conditions bring a new set of challenges for our members and a changing environment for Chartered Surveyors generally. We have all experienced unprecedented and sustained growth over recent years which in turn have brought significant pressures of workload with ever increasing demands from client's in terms of reporting times combined with high expectation of quality.

Now a new challenge presents itself in terms of a more difficult property market and construction sector. Our members face the task of managing client expectations with well reasoned advice while also providing the vision to see beyond current market conditions and taking a wider view. In addition, we must all contribute to the continued running of our practices during difficult times which largely requires the profession to utilise new skills in the area of adaptation and change management.

The relatively young age profile of the surveying workforce which has been a key driver of the economic boom of recent years now presents an interesting challenge insofar as these younger colleagues have not had experience of an economic downturn and require mentoring and guidance from those Surveyors who have. While many of our members have experienced the tough times, the fact that we have a large cohort of colleagues who have not brings a whole new dimension to this problem which we have never experienced in these proportions before. The key to the recovery lies in these younger Surveyors with the correct guidance and motivation.

All of this presents the Society with both a difficult challenge but also an opportunity to support and lead our members by promoting the Chartered Surveyor brand as the definitive mark of quality, skill and professionalism in the property and construction industry. We now work in an era of globalisation where international firms have grown bigger and stronger. In my opinion, their dominance has obscured the position of the Society to some extent. The Society has a role to play within our industry as a centre of excellence, promoting the highest professional standards and supporting our members in whatever way possible.

The Society has grown significantly in recent years with approximately 2,200 corporate members and in excess of 1,200 probationers across all divisions. The role and importance of the Society and the key focus for the years ahead must concentrate resources in key areas such as profile, branding, education, Continuing Professional Development, communication and regulation and maintenance of standards.

In education, the Society has made significant progress by investing efforts and resources into our relationships with the colleges and right through the APC process working with employers in both construction and property. There is however, scope for us to make improvements in the delivery of Continuing Professional Development for corporate members and to work towards a system that provides consistently high quality CPD that is relevant to members and of assistance in their professional day-to-day activities. This is an ongoing project, where much has been achieved but will require continued attention and resources from the team in Wilton Place supported by the Officers and other members who give considerable time to this area.

In recent years, much has been done to improve communications with the members and this will be further developed in the short term. In this regard our new Director General, Ciara Murphy has initiated some new forms of communication with the members including a new SCS Bulletin, Divisional E-Zines along with the evolution of existing media such as the SCS review which will

now be published on a quarterly basis. In addition, it is our attention to rekindle a legal update within the SCS Review for members.

The new SCS Website, whilst still suffering with some teething problems will be rectified during the summer months. Next year will also see the publication of a full colour Annual Report outlining the progress of the Society during 2008/09.

Other specific initiatives in the short term include the establishment of a working party to review the appointment of Third Party Arbitrators and Independent Experts. This review will include an assessment of the appointment process itself, and the maintenance and management of the panel of Chartered Surveyors. In this regard, there is scope for specific CPD and training to enable the panel to be as diverse as possible but yet maintain a high consistent standard of skill and expertise across our members.

There is also opportunity for us in the area of research which, in my opinion, has been underutilised and could provide the Society with an opportunity for a profile around well researched independent comment. Recent successful examples of projects have included the SCS Housing Study 2007 prepared by Dr. Brendan Williams, Brian Hughes and Patrick Shiels and also indirectly The Twice the Size study prepared by The Futures Academy of DIT commissioned by the Urban Forum of which the Society is part. Notwithstanding this, there is further scope to develop this area.

The Society is a national organisation and the importance of its national presence should not be underestimated. Furthermore, the Society enjoys a strong place in the international context and we will be participating and keeping in close touch with developments within the European Union and our member groupings there. Our relationship with the RICS is particularly important to us and we will continue to work to evolve a new basis of cooperation and association.

Finally, I would like to thank Tony Smith for his support and guidance over many years and I speak for all when I say we look forward to working with Tony again in his capacity as Registrar under the Building Control Act 2007. I look forward to representing the Society as your President during the coming session and working with Ciara Murphy, the other officers and the wider pool of active and committed members who make this task much easier and rewarding for all involved and to the benefit of the wider membership and the Society itself.