



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008

Working for Safety on the Road

It was a pleasure to return to the post of Chairman of AIRSO after a 13 year gap. It was also quite amazing to see how different the organisation was to when I left the chair.

In 1995 the Chairman officiated at five general meetings and two or three Council of Management meetings. The Association had a couple of hundred members. By 2008 we had conferences, seminars, workshops and breakfast meetings as well as general meetings, and well over 600 members. In 95 we had a secretary who had a day job – now he works almost full time for AIRSO. And the financial scale of the organisation has changed beyond belief.

AIRSO is now such a big organisation that you probably need to be Chairman or Secretary to understand its scale. We've filled big conference rooms in hotels for the St John Conference, the Blue Light Users Conference and the Road Safety Wales Conference. We've fielded top class speakers at these events and all three continue to thrive. Meanwhile many members just don't know about this aspect of their organisation's work.

It gave me real pleasure to speak, as AIRSO Chairman, to both the St John Conference and the Blue Light Users Conference. It was also interesting to see the different perspectives on road safety of delegates to these (and all the other) meetings and important to be reminded that AIRSO is a broad church of road safety professionals, not a narrow group pursuing a single goal. I was also delighted to see how the Road Safety Group, set up when I was last Chairman, has developed.

As AIRSO chairman I was asked to sum up the day at the Road Safety Expo 08, one of AIRSO's partnered events, and attend the PACTS Westminster Lecture and Dinner. I also hosted a reception for the substantial group of AIRSO members who attended the RoSPA National Road Safety Congress in Glasgow, which helped the Association promote itself in the major gathering of road safety people during 2008. None of these things happened in 1995.

Turning to things that were happening in 1995, AIRSO was just beginning to discuss its long term development plan. Central to this was setting up an AIRSO office with someone appointed to conduct the affairs of the Association, a vision which has now become reality. However, this plan was built around us building up sufficient reserves that we could run at a loss for a few years. This was done, Graham Feest moved into the role, and the losses were made.

My central theme for this year was therefore to start work on ending these losses, and I am delighted that the financial success of the events of the year and the triumph of increasing members in spite of raising the subscriptions means that AIRSO finished the year in the black. With the “downturn” now with us the concentration on money has done us well.

The existence of the AIRSO office is also key to the service that we offer our members and those who contact the Association – it means the “communications” can come thick and fast, and that members are kept abreast of what is happening, and given a forum to discuss current issues. We are no more an organisation that rotates around meetings, and the communication is the main link with most of the membership. The “office” also feeds our webmasters who keep our site up to date.

No chairman can finish a report without thanking people. I have written personally to many of those who have gone out of their way to help this year and to our sponsors and the providers of venues for our meetings. But I can't write to Mr Secretary Feest, or Mr Treasurer Bailey every day to thank them for their efforts so I do in this report. Meanwhile Vice Chairman Lynn Morris, who allowed me to flee the hemisphere in mid term, and Road Safety Group Chairman Sue Cooper, who seems to be everywhere, also needs thanking.

Thank you for the honour of allowing me to be your Chairman for 2008.

Andrew Howard MBE, FAIRSO
Chairman of AIRSO 2008