



## INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to present what will be my last report as Secretary of AIRSO having been in this role involving leading the Association for the last 25 years. With 2015 being the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AIRSO, recording that my tenure of office has been for half of the time which the Association has existed, it seemed appropriate that the time had come for a change, allowing the next period of development to be driven by new initiatives and new people.

## EVENTS DURING 2015

There have in my view been two very key events this year, the first being the Annual General Meeting at this time last year when our anniversary year was launched and we welcomed the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire who attended to present our anniversary awards to a number of "unsung heroes" in Road Safety who had not been recognised for their commitment in any other way. The second main event was the anniversary lunch which was sponsored by Hinckley Island Hotel and Mustard Presentations and provided a programme looking back at the last 50 years in terms of road safety. I was perhaps sad in this year that the event which took place in October at the British Standards Institute Laboratory in Hemel Hempstead was not very well attended and we are grateful to the staff at BSI for the arrangements which they made for a comparatively small number against what we had originally given as our projected attendance.

The Council of Management has tussled over the last few years with the falling support for our events and the financial implications that arise as a consequence. We have always adopted the principle that running events for the benefit of the members is a key element of what we do and subsidising them is only right and proper but along with this is the need to look at the actual level of subsidy which arises on an individual event basis related to the number of attendees. This year we have been fortunate that Member events overall have not costs as much to the Association as normal due to the sponsorship which we have received from our hosts on the basis that it has been our anniversary year.

## MEMBERSHIP

I need to report to you that the Membership at the end of 2015 was 592. This compares with a Membership at the end of 2014 of 658. It was perhaps disappointing that with it being the anniversary year that fewer new members joined AIRSO than had been hoped and as a result the losses at the beginning of the year were not recouped by the end. We do need to recognise that membership organisations in general are not fairing particularly well at present with many reporting falling numbers and difficulties with recruitment. AIRSO need to revisit the whole reason as to why people join and emphasise the benefits of being in Membership along with finding that Unique Selling Point which clearly needs to be something different from our appeal in the past.

During the year the Association chose to exhibit at The Motor Schools Association's Annual Conference in Nottingham where a free exhibition site was made available to us.

## WEBSITE

In the autumn, we learned that Ian Kemeys who had designed and managed the AIRSO Public Section of the website was seeking to step down from this role and we were fortunate that Mike Lyne who currently looks after the member's area agreed to take over initial responsibility for the public area as well. As a result a few adjustments were made so that the two areas became more compatible and written in the same "language" and this went live just prior to the end of the year. We were grateful to Mike Lyne for undertaking this work as he himself has also indicated his intention to step down as soon as possible and the Council of Management has now to determine how the site will progress and by whom for the future. We need to place on record our appreciation to Ian Kemeys for not only designing the site but also managing the public section through the sponsorship of the Stilwell Partnership over the years he has been involved.

Any website is vital nowadays for ensuring people know of our existence as a leading road safety organisation. It is also an important portal for potential members and we find nowadays that a lot of new members come via the website and not so much from existing members bringing them to events of the Association. The Members section, affectionally known as the MEA contains a lot of valuable information including a library of information. Few weeks pass without something being added and twice a year we have published a list of the contents of this part of our site.

## **THE COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT**

With the sudden and sad passing of Robert Jackson in February, the Council has been running with just eight Members this last year. Arranging meetings has not been easy but despite this four meetings of the Council of Management have taken place. The lack of road safety policy coming from Government has meant that the road safety advisory panel has not met and this will be referred to in greater details in that report.

## **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

I am delighted to be able to say that the statement of accounts which will be presented to you by the Treasurer showed a surplus of income over expenditure for the second year running. There is no doubt that a lot of this is due to the goodwill of those Members who freely undertake commitments for the Association and do not claim their legitimate expense entitlement. The Council of Management is attempting to try and reflect the real costs of running AIRSO which also includes a nominal estimate of the time given by individuals with management responsibilities but this is not easy to really identify. Many organisations such as AIRSO rely on the goodwill of employers and others who donate in some way resources and this includes staff time for which AIRSO like others are grateful. This frequently also covers the actual financial costs involved and in some way we would like to capture this so far as AIRSO is concerned. It is only in this way that we can get a true account of what it is actually costing to run the Association.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS**

Regular communication plays an important part in the service which we provide for Members and that is why I do make an effort to provide some form of communication most weeks. In that context I need to emphasise however that our regular email communication is exactly that – regular and this does not necessarily mean every week. During 2015 we published, what I hope were informative and at times thought provoking – 36 communications. This was fewer than 2014 reflecting the lack of information in generally being sent into the Association. For many members the information, views and opinions which are expressed on this regular basis is of key value and they see this as one of the reasons for being part of AIRSO. I would like to thank those who have contributed to the content of these publications and invite anyone to submit articles to me or indeed to comment on what is contained in the various items. There have been one or two debates via the communications in respect of certain issues over the year and in some cases dialogue has spread over two, three or even four weeks. Providing opportunity for everyone to express an opinion or state their view is an important feature and strength of AIRSO; and when it comes to having to construct a formal response to an issue the wide opinion is most helpful as I can then reflect more accurately the views of AIRSO members rather than the views of one or two individuals.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

I come now to my final remarks after 25 years of leading the Association. In my report last year I concluded by saying:

“By the time we reach the end of the year it will mean for me a personal achievement for I will have been steering the organisation for 25 years and this in its own way gives me a great sense satisfaction for 25 years ago the long term future of the Association was in doubt.”

In 1991 the Association had 82 Members. However times were different then and although some of our meeting were poorly attended there were those where almost 50% were attending. There was a Council of Management in name but it was not really structured in any way and we were certainly not a charity. There was no Road Safety Group/Panel of any kind. Successive Chairman in the early days were all keen to make their mark in some way and so new thing and directions were set. I cannot

possibly convey in these few paragraphs all that has happened but I do know that it has been an exciting 25 years. That said all good things come to an end and nothing stands still. After 25 years it is right for me to go and my time represents 50% of the history of AIRSO and so the next 25 years which will be different needs to be taken forward in a new way with new people.

However these last 25 years would not have happened without the overall support of AIRSO Members both past and present. I remember with great affection a number of Members who have passed away during my time and some of the very close conversations I have had which have lasting memories probably none more than that between myself and one of the founder members, Ted Teer a few days before his death. His words are etched in my mind and that is where they will stay. I have every reason to be thankful to all those who have been chairmen of AIRSO, some on more than one occasion, and those who have served on the Council of Management over the years. It is difficult to mention names specifically and in hesitating to do there are just a few whose contribution to AIRSO and help to me have made a great deal of difference over the last 25 years.

In that context my special thanks have to go to firstly Andrew Howard from whom I took over this role and who was for ever present at the events we held, not just providing a current affairs report but filling in gaps with something when we were short of speakers or on the rare occasion that one failed to arrive. Always ready with his OHP's in the early days or latterly his power point slides. It always seemed that we were never off the phone picking each other's brains.

I then have to mention Edward Handley who frequently put AIRSO before his own business, providing accommodation at his premises for meetings and re-arranging his own courses so we could use the room and not forgetting his great capacity to see further beyond the issue and making me pause before doing something and running the reception at our events which included the hours before making badges.

I learned a great deal from Bob Jackson and enjoyed very much creating with him the National Blue Light Users Conference. I spent hours with him not just with regard to the conference but he led for a good few years the Long Term Strategy Group and has to be credited with a great deal of the way in which AIRSO is today.

David Wilkinson, now no longer a Member brought the Association into the technological age establishing the first AIRSO Website and setting up our first email connections.

And finally I must say a very big thank you to Bill Bailey as Treasurer of AIRSO. His work load at times of the year and with the various payment options we offer makes his role invaluable and not something which I would ever have been able to have combined with mine.

Of course those whom I have mentioned along with all the Members of AIRSO both past and present have done what they have in the interests of the Association but in doing so have ensured my sanity in giving their expert knowledge and technical knowhow which frequently surpasses my comprehension.

As my Methodist Minister said to the congregation on leaving the Church for pastures new I am now going to turn off the light for my time here has ended. Something or someone new will arrive soon with a new direction and new ideas. It won't be the same and neither should it be and they will then turn the light back on and it is important that you all support whatever that future will bring.

I very much hope that will be what happens with AIRSO. It has been an honour and a privilege to have led the Association for 25 years and I really wish you all well for the future.

Graham Feest  
Secretary  
20<sup>th</sup> January 2016

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