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Change of name and change of committee

You will note we have added another "M" to IMMpress, this follows our AGM on 15 May 2003 at which the change of name of the Branch to the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining was approved. Shortly we will also be updating our web site to reflect this.

The AGM, as you will all be aware, was postponed and unfortunately scaled down due to SARS. However, it is hoped that an annual dinner will be held in the autumn. Despite the change of venue 22 members enjoyed a pleasant drink in the open air with a number continuing on to Dinner later. During the meeting Bob Coates was presented with the IMM's Overseas Award that was awarded to him by the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy in August 2002.

At the AGM the new council was confirmed and this comprises:

President - Steve Parry

Secretary - Louisa McAra

Treasurer - Howie Cheung

Members; Patrick Cox, Florent Desaintpaul, Paul O'Sullivan, Dalton Wong, Steve Williamson and Y C Lam.

At the first Council meeting on 22 May, Bob Coates and Dick Martin were both co-opted onto Council. In addition, to promote broader co-operation within the profession, the Geological Society of London HK Regional Group and the Tunnelling Society have both been invited to send representatives to Council meetings. Norman Woods has also kindly agreed to continue as the professional assessment co-ordinator.

Professional Status of Engineering Geologists

Early last year the Council approached the Branch membership with respect to their view on the professional status of Engineering Geologists in Hong Kong. This was carried out by means of a questionnaire, the results of which were reported at the AGM in May 2002. Following the questionnaire the council set up a working party, Chaired by Mark Thorn, to consider both the members views and the best way forward on the matter. I am pleased to report that Council has endorsed the working party's conclusions.

Attached is a copy of the working party statement which proposes to establish a "List" of Engineering Geologists within the Branch and requests volunteers to help establish this.

Technical Talks

Given that the problem of SARS is receding a programme of technical talks/visits is being re-established.

Saturday 14 June 2003, Technical Site Visit to Castle Peak Road Improvement between Sham Tseng and Ka Loon Tsuen, Tsuen Wan, organised by Paul O'Sullivan.

Thursday 3rd July 2003, Mariners Club, TST, Talk on 'How to successfully get through your Professional Review Interview' organised by Norman Woods.

July 2003 (exact date to be fixed), Talk by Dr Fred Baynes, an Engineering Geologist based in Perth Australia (Joint with Geol Soc).

28th August 2003, a full day training course featuring case studies on Natural Terrain Landslides and Hazard Studies (Joint with Geol Soc).

Full details will be supplied nearer the date.

Other News

In the UK, the first Membership Committee of the IMMM will be on 24th June, which will hopefully improve processing time.

Some members have contacted the Branch Council with respect to errors in their subscriptions as sent from the UK. In order to find out the scope of this, we would be grateful if members could send details of any problems they have encountered to Steve Parry (geeg1_pln@ced.gov.hk).

In Europe the IAEG, ISRM & ISSMGE assisted by the EFG have set up a working group to review the position of engineering geology within the framework of ground engineering. With the establishment of Eurocode 7 and increasing legislation in the ECC the working group considers there is a pressing need to prepare a statement of the competencies and qualifications that are required to practice as Engineering Geologists and Geotechnical Engineers. In particular this would define the interfaces and areas of co-operation rather than the boundaries. It is intended that strands of Codes, Professional Qualifications and education are pulled together in a report to be signed by all parties (European Geologist, No. 15 June 2003).

Steve Parry
Editor, IMMMPress

The Professional Status of Engineering Geologists

Some time ago we circulated a questionnaire to solicit your views on the recognition of engineering geological skills in engineering projects. The findings of that survey were summarised at the last AGM and, given the strong response on the subject, a committee was set up to consider this matter further – we are now in a position to report on the Committee’s conclusions.

The responses to the questionnaire suggested that the Membership is broadly in favour of some form of initiative, with the main reasons appearing to be:

- A perception that the benefits of appropriate engineering geological input in engineering projects is not universally appreciated
- A feeling that there is not a clear career path for engineering geologists
- That, in the absence of anything else, an RPE(G) qualification is being taken as the sole measure of geotechnical competence

In recognition of the views of the Membership, the Committee, which was broadly-based, debated the following two options referred to in the questionnaire:

1. Introducing a listing of Engineering Geologists.
2. Pursuing registration, perhaps following the RPE(G) model of the Engineer’s Registration Board.

The Committee considered the following points to be pertinent with respect to the second option:

- That pursuing registration might tend to fragment the geotechnical profession
- That Engineering Geologists might, if registration was implemented, end up only being allowed to perform a relatively narrow number of duties
- That, consequently, Engineering Geologists might not develop the wider skills needed if they wished to practice as geotechnical engineers

In view of these points, and being strongly of the view that fragmentation of the geotechnical profession is not desirable, the overall conclusions of the Committee were as follows:

1. Increasing the profile of engineering geology was the best way to improve appreciation of the benefits this provides to engineering projects.
2. That the Institution considers setting up a listing of Engineering Geologists.
3. At this time at least, that registration and regulation not be pursued.

With respect to increasing the profile of engineering geology, the Institution for its part will continue to promote engineering geology through the bi-annual Conferences, regular technical meetings and other initiatives.

Turning to the possibility of setting up a list of Engineering Geologists, the Committee concluded that:

1. This should, at least initially, be on the basis of voluntary self-declaration by Corporate Members
2. Members should, if they wish to be included in the list, declare their competence (or otherwise) against a number of skill areas (to be defined)
3. The list should be mounted on the Branch’s website

As an interim, it is intended that the definition of Engineering Geologist for the purpose of the list be taken as “a corporate member of the IMMM with a degree in geology or a related subject and at least one years post graduate experience in geotechnics, as well as a post graduate qualification in geotechnical engineering

or engineering geology. If a post graduate degree has not been taken, at least three years of post graduate experience in geotechnics is required”.

The appropriateness of pursuing registration or not will be reviewed in the future following the establishment of the list and monitoring of its acceptance by the Profession.

Setting up and administering a listing would, if implemented, involve considerable effort on the part of the Branch. Correspondingly, before deciding whether to proceed, volunteers are sought who would be willing to assist in this undertaking. Assuming there are sufficient submissions, a lead-administrator and a number of assistants would then be selected by Council to take the initiative forward.

If you are interested in taking part, please respond to Steve Parry before 30 June 2003, providing the following information:

- Name and contact details
- Employer
- Areas of professional activity
- CV
- An indication whether you are volunteering to be the lead-administrator
- A brief statement (no more than 100 words) setting out your reasons for volunteering