

## Chairman's Message

### *Two steps forward, one step back*

Step 1 (forward) – the Newsletter. I recently asked for your views on the content and style of the Newsletter and received responses verbally, by email and on the website Discussion Forum, all of which agreed a facelift is required. As a small start towards this process, I commissioned several articles from willing RSPSoc activists for this issue, and you can see the results for yourself – Member Profiles, Committee Reports, and What's new at [www.rpsoc.org](http://www.rpsoc.org)? More substantially, Mark Cutler, Chairman of the Publications Committee, has initiated a Newsletter Facelift Working Party to review broadly the content and delivery of the Newsletter. Mark would be very pleased to hear any views you have, so please contact him ([m.e.j.cutler@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:m.e.j.cutler@dundee.ac.uk)) or add to the new discussion on the RSPSoc website – <http://www.rpsoc.org/discussion-forum/viewthread/45/>.

Step 2 (forward\*) – the website. Some strong procedural developments have been made recently with the website, but I won't cover these here since Karen Anderson provides a detailed report in her 'What's new at [www.rpsoc.org](http://www.rpsoc.org)?' section. I do, though, want to congratulate Alex Koh, Chairman of the Education and Training Committee on his efforts towards GIS Day, which used the website as an educational delivery mechanism (<http://www.rpsoc.org/information-zones/learning-zone/gisday/>). I'm sure many of you are aware of GIS Day, a world-wide initiative to help and encourage GIS education. For our (RSPSoc's) part, Alex and his team prepared and sent GIS Day brochures to UK schools, inviting them to access additional learning resources through the website. This was an unqualified success, with a new record number of website visitors (this can be seen on the main Discussion Forum page)! See Alex's Committee Report for further details about GIS Day.

Step 3 (well, not back, but not far forward either) – Annual lecture/Conversazione. When suggesting this idea in the last Newsletter issue, I hoped for very rapid developments such that I could announce a spring event in this issue. Perhaps this was too ambitious for what is a major undertaking, but I am aware that some members perceive Society mechanisms to move quite slowly, and I am keen to demonstrate speedy progress where possible. Responses regarding the Conversazione have been positive – thanks in particular to Geoff Smith for indulging me with a response on the Discussion Forum! – and we (Council) are currently discussing where, when, what and who. Thoughts, suggestions, preferences welcome.

Much other RSPSoc business has taken place in the short time since the last Newsletter. What was a very full Council agenda is summarised by Philippa Mason, Hon. Gen. Sec., in the Council News section. RSPSoc was invited to participate in DEFRA's Earth Observation Week, organised to mark 50 years of space exploration, and Stuart Marsh, Chairman of the External Affairs Committee, provides a report of this meeting. I'm also delighted to congratulate the Society's Executive Secretary, Karen Laughton, on receiving the University of Nottingham's Long Service Award. As many of you know, Karen's been attentively guiding all Society business for, well, a good while now, and deserves our very great thanks.

Forthcoming RSPSoc events include the Annual UKGEOforum Lecture, to be delivered by Ian Jackson of the British Geological Survey on the OneGeology project, on 31 January 2008. The Annual Student Meeting also takes place soon, with the registration deadline on 28 January 2008, before the meeting itself on 10-11 March 2008. This promises to be a great all-round event, with Tina Thomson, the current Student Representative, arranging a strong social programme in addition to the technical presentations. I'm pleased to say I'll be attending, and just hope my back is up to kayaking, abseiling, etc! Finally, on behalf of RSPSoc, my very best wishes to all for a happy festive season and a fruitful new year.

\*I've been reminded of one small area where website development has stalled – online membership subscription. I understand it was promised last year that subscriptions would be payable online this year, but they're not yet this year so now they should be next year. Bear in mind, I'm writing this in 2007 and you may be reading it in 2008. Next year, I promise!

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